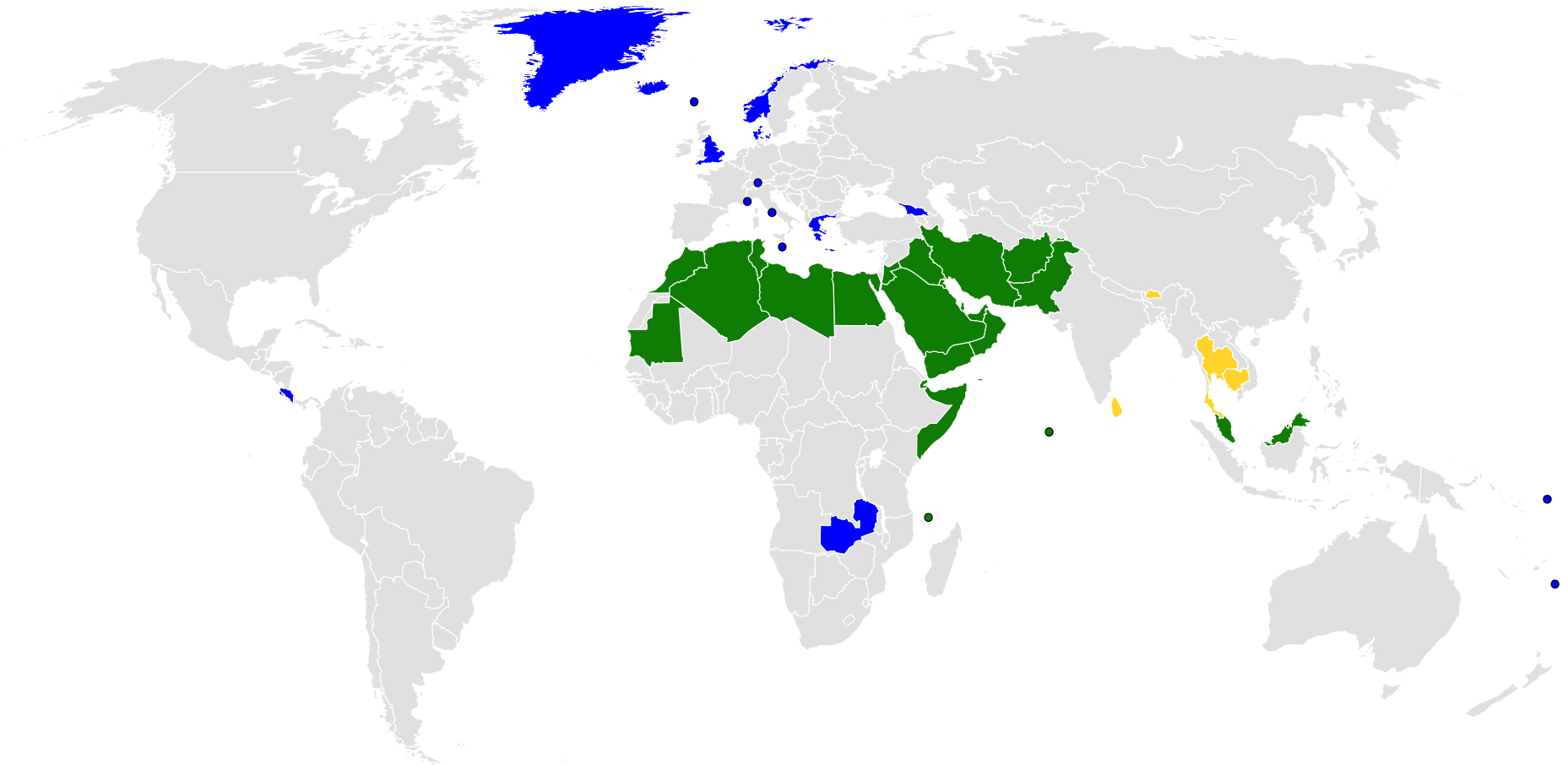


A Brief History of Religion and Government

How World Faiths Were Sponsored and Shaped by Five Millennia of State Policy



Countries that have an official state religion in our world today.
Blue countries are Christian; the green are Islamic; the yellow are Buddhist.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_state_religions.svg

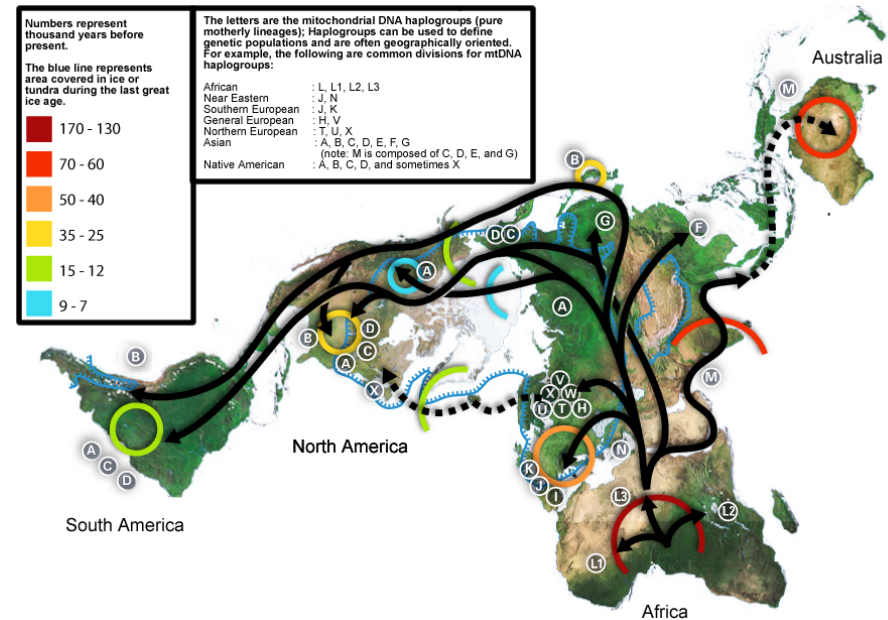
Prehistoric religion and government

Before anatomically modern humans and through the Middle Stone Age

- 1) The evolution of various neurological precursors allowed us to “experience” the supernatural and hold supernatural beliefs. See ***Religion Explained* by Pascal Boyer** and ***In Gods We Trust* by Scott Atran** for further evidence.
- 2) Archaeological evidence of fantastic and otherworldly beliefs seems to predate the rise of agriculture by dozens of millennia: goddess figurines, varieties of grave goods, cave paintings of non-existent entities (e.g. lion-man), and other apparently symbolic and abstract artifacts (e.g. petroglyphs).
- 3) Evidence from hunter/gatherer cultures in recent centuries further indicate that supernatural beliefs and religious rituals are found in all known human societies... *presumably* reflecting the beliefs and rituals of our Stone Age ancestors.
- 4) There is no evidence of permanent hierarchy among hunter/gatherers living nomadically, and thus, *there were probably no lasting governments before the Late Stone Age.*

The Late Stone Age Revolution and the dawn of the Bronze Age

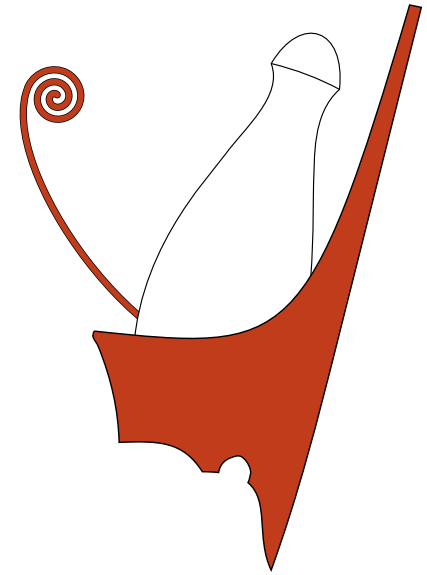
- 1) Farming communities began to form as agriculture developed for the first time ~12,000 years ago in the Levant and spread throughout Mesopotamia during the next thousand years. At first, this *greatly* limited the variety of foods available, led to an increase in health problems, and reduced the average lifespan... but it also led to food surpluses and population growth. The domestication of large animals was already underway, but accelerated as agriculture developed. Agriculture began in China around 10,000 years ago apart from developments in the Middle East. Farming spread out from the Levant & Mesopotamia (AKA “the Fertile Crescent”), as well as from China, to all of the rest of Eurasia and North Africa. New Guinea, the Americas, and sub-Saharan Africa developed agriculture independently later, but the “head start” in Eurasia had enormous consequences on subsequent history. See ***Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond** on how the worldwide distribution of resources affected the development of different regions leading up to today.
- 2) Evidence of battles between settlements, as well as between settlements and nomadic pastoralists, begins to appear very sporadically. The creation of megalithic monuments begins; more “goddess” statuettes, bull statuettes, and other decorative items are found; evidence of animal sacrifices begin to appear; and evidence of some human sacrifices. Evidence of hierarchy remains scarce, but very gradually increases as settlements get bigger and irrigation starts to be employed. Buildings assumed to be dedicated temples appear.
- 3) The emergence of bronze smelting ~5,000 years ago begins to accelerate the social changes even more. Real cities emerge with 10,000+ residents. Evidence of social hierarchy expands enormously in the Early Bronze Age... and the first religious texts appear.



Early Bronze Age – Near East

Early dynastic and “Old Kingdom” Egypt

- 1) Narmer, king of Upper Egypt, conquered Lower Egypt ~3100 BC and became the first pharaoh, creating the first true “national” state. The pharaoh’s divine kingship prevails from the beginning...
- 2) The pharaoh Djer ruled ~3000 BC. When Flinders Petrie excavated his tomb, he discovered 318 *retainers* sacrificed with the king. This practice ended ~2900 BC as the second dynasty took power.
- 3) Pyramid building peaked at Giza early in the Old Kingdom era ~2550 BC, as the Egyptian state became more unitary, it centered religion around the pharaoh’s divine status, and favored the temples of major deities increasingly recognized by **all** Egyptians alongside local gods. The cults of Ra, Ptah, and the Nine Gods of Heliopolis were of high significance in this early period.
- 4) The **Pyramid Texts** were carved into the interior walls of pyramids at Saqqara between ~2400 BC to ~2100 BC. They detail “utterances” to revive the pharaoh’s body, or that of his wives whose pyramids also have these texts, and deliver him safely to the heavens, where he can eat the very gods in their animal forms to acquire their powers. The gods are *threatened* if they do not help in this endeavor!
- 5) After over 900 years as a unitary kingdom, five decades of instability inaugurated the First Intermediate Period as Upper and Lower Egypt split ~2130 BC and remained disunified for about seventy years until Upper Egypt again conquered Lower Egypt. Osiris becomes a popular deity for all!



Sumeria and the Akkadian Empire

- 1) Sumerians began using cuneiform ~3200 BC. Sumerian texts begin to emerge ~2600 BC, with the **Instructions of Shuruppak** and the **Kesh temple hymn** being two of the earliest. Early Semetic languages, Akkadian and Eblaite, are used in cuneiform texts from ~2500 BC.
- 2) Sumerian city-states form under the rule of local kings beginning ~2900 BC, replacing rule by chief priests and city elders. Ziggurat building begins. From ~2600 BC, the cities of Sumeria grew and built walls while villages disappeared; the much later Sumerian King List suggests an era of city-states competing for overlordship. En-mebaragesi, father of Akka of Kish, is named in texts recovered from this time, suggesting Bilgamesh *might have* ruled Uruk then. Retainer sacrifices were found in the city of Ur from ~2600 BC to ~2450 BC, where graves of nobles may contain six to eighty well-dressed courtiers. No other Sumerian cities have exhibited this practice.
- 3) Eannatum of Lagash briefly formed a small empire over all Sumeria during the 2400s BC, but it collapses at his death; later on, Lugal-annemunda of Adab did the same. Then Lugal-zagesi of Umma united Sumeria ~2350 BC and made Uruk his capitol, but falls to Sargon.
- 4) Sargon of Akkad conquers Sumer from the north ~2330 BC, unifying all Mesopotamia. The new rulers use the Akkadian language and Akkadian texts begin to proliferate. Akkadian deities were already syncretized with Sumerian deities. **Sargon’s daughter En-heduanna, high priest of Nanna at Ur, wrote hymns in Sumerian** as the world’s first known author and assisted Sargon in governing Sumeria.
- 5) Naram-sin declares himself “God of Akkad, King of the Universe” ~2250. The Sumerian **Curse of Akkad**, from ~2100 BC, explains that Akkad’s fall ~2150 resulted from Enlil’s divine vengeance for the plundering of his temple, E-kur, during Naram-sin’s sack of the city of Nippur. Earliest **Bilgamesh stories** written. Gutians invaded from the east and held parts of Mesopotamia for a few chaotic decades...
- 6) Utu-hengal of Uruk drove out the Gutians ~2120 BC. Soon after Ur-Nammu of Ur founds the Ur III dynasty. Ur-Nammu’s son Shulgi ruled for over five decades, deified during his reign. Ur III used the **Code of Ur-Nammu**, the oldest extant legal code. Four decades after Shulgi’s death, Elamites capture his grandson ~2000 BC. The **Lament for Ur** (now in the Louvre) is composed in reaction to this.

Middle Bronze Age – Near East

The rise of early Assyria and Babylon

- 1) After 2000 BC, small Akkadian city-states throughout Mesopotamia started growing and competing. Amorites from the Levant conquered many of them: Mari, Eshnunna, and Assur in the north; Isin and Larsa of former Sumaria in the south. **Law codes of Eshnunna** and **Lipit-Ishtar of Isin**, the **Legend of Etana**, and the early Akkadian **Epic of Gilgamesh** are from this period.
- 2) Shamshi-Adad, an Amorite, conquered Assur ~1808 BC and Mari ~1795 BC, forming a new Assyrian state.
- 3) The **Mari tablets** include 3,000 letters from this era, including those of King Zimri-Lim, who relied on the competence of his wife and daughters.
- 4) Hammurabi became ruler of tiny Babylon ~1792 BC. After decades of peaceful reign, he conquered all Mesopotamia by ~1755 and promulgated **his famous Laws**. Samsu-iluna inherited this empire ~1750 BC, but revolts began succeeding, leaving him only Mari and Babyonia itself.
- 5) Assur-dugal defeated the Amorite kings of Assyria ~1732 BC; Adasi, *whose dynasty ruled Assyria until 612 BC*, reigned from ~1726 BC! He is *not* “king”, but *Issi'ak* Assur, meaning “servant of Ashur”.
- 6) Sumerian creation myths proliferated in this era, but Sumerian identity died out completely by ~1700 BC.



The **Enuma Elis** AKA “Babylonian Genesis” tells of Marduk’s rise to kingship of the gods, but later Assyrian versions tell of *Ashur’s* rise!

“Middle Kingdom” Egypt

- 1) Mentuhotep II reunifies Egypt ~2020 BC from Thebes, leading to a new period of Egyptian stability. During the next century, the pharaohs focus on fortifying the eastern Sinai and the southern borders and on internal development. Senusret III ruled from ~1878 BC to ~1839 BC; he expanded Egypt into Nubia and invaded Canaan as far as Shechem; he was worshiped as a god in his own lifetime and Egypt prospered for decades after. These pharaohs initially promoted the hawk god Montu, but he is eclipsed by devotion to Amun.
- 2) From ~2100 BC, increased devotion to Osiris in hope of a good afterlife led to **Coffin Texts** in Egyptian graves, with 1,185 distinct “utterances” recorded. The **Story of Sinuhe**, **Maxims of Ptah-hotep**, **Debate Between a Man and his Soul**, **Teaching of Dua-Kheti**, **Cheops’ Tales**, **Teaching of Ipuwer**, and other works of this era demonstrate the maturity of Egyptian literature and the beginnings of philosophy.
- 3) During the 1700s BC, Egypt descended into a dark age lasting over a century, splitting between the descendants of Canaanite migrants (Amorites?) who declared a pharaoh in Lower Egypt’s Nile Delta while the native Egyptian pharaohs ruled only Middle and Upper Egypt.

Late Bronze Age – Near East

Hyksos invasion of Egypt and their expulsion

Egypt remained divided as the Semetic-speaking Hyksos invaded(?) across the Sinai ~1650 BC, establishing a new pharaoh in Lower Egypt and then slowly campaigning south. The Hyksos worshiped Set, who was *probably* associated with Canaanite Ba'al Hadad; the pharaoh Apepi might have worshiped *only* Set. A native Egyptian pharaoh rose in Thebes ~1580 BC and his heirs started pushing the Hyksos back. Ahmose I expelled the Hyksos ~1522 BC, reunifying all Egypt. After this, the Egyptians began demonizing Set. Josephus and other ancient Greek historians *firmly* associated the expulsion of the Hyksos with the Exodus.

Hittite Empire, Kassite Babylonia, Mitanni, and Mycenaean Greece

- 1) The Hittites, who used the first written Indo-European language, emerged as a large Anatolian kingdom ~1650 BC. Mursili I conquered Yamhad ~1595 and later that year raided down the Euphrates through Mari and Babylon, looting Marduk's idol from the latter's temple.
- 2) Akum II, a Kassite ruler from Iran's Zagros Mountains, claimed Babylon's throne and then recaptured Marduk's idol from the Hittites ~1570 BC as a proof of his divine mandate to rule. Kassite kings ruled Babylon until ~1219 BC.
- 3) The Hurrians united into the Mitanni kingdom of the northern Euphrates watershed during the later 1500s BC. They captured territory from the west of the Assyrians, the east and southeast of the Hittites, and kept the Kassites from expanding northwards. The Mitanni conquered Assyria ~1460 BC, forcing the rulers of Assur to be their vassals, while they also expanded into eastern Anatolia and the northern Levant, but they lost their grip on Assyria by ~1400 BC and steadily lost territory in their west to resurgent Hittites.
- 4) The Mycenaeans spread from mainland Greece beginning ~1500 BC, ruled at Crete from ~1450 BC, ruled the Aegean Sea region including coastal Anatolia by ~1390 BC, and created the earliest Greek writing based on Cretan script by ~1375 BC. The destruction of Troy in ~1190 BC *may have* inspired Homer's *Iliad*; Hittite records indicate a Luwian-speaking city called Wilusa at the site.

“New Kingdom” Egypt through Amenhotep III

- 1) After reunifying Egypt, Ahmose I and his heirs focused on expansion, conquering Nubia to their south and most of Canaan to their northeast. Queen Hatshepsut took power ~1479 BC as pharaoh. She succeeded in war, expanded trade, and commissioned construction unrivaled for a millennium. Her grandson, who avoided memorializing his own queens, tried taking credit for her monuments and erasing her records, but failed. Much remains intact. Her burial ~1458 BC included the **Book of the Dead**, used in Egyptian burials into Roman times.
- 2) Amenhotep III took his throne ~1386 BC and led Egypt in continued prosperity. The **Amarna letters** give us a glimpse into the world of himself, his son Amenhotep IV, Egyptian Canaan, and foreign powers during the heights of Egyptian empire.



Late Bronze Age – Near East

Atenist Egypt and the zenith of the Egyptian Empire

- 1) Amenhotep IV became pharaoh ~1352 BC. He was renamed Akhenaten ~1346 BC and pursued thorough religious reforms emphasizing Aten (the sun disk) over *all other* Egyptian gods, *particularly* replacing Amun. Eventually he ordered worship of *only* Aten, marking Atenism as history's first state-mandated monotheism, but it ended by ~1325 BC after Akhenaten's son Tutankhaten was renamed Tutankhamen and restored Egypt's religion. The unique art, literature, symbolism, and theology of Atenism represent the most radical “cultural revolution” of the Bronze Age. Later pharaohs tried to destroy records and monuments of it.
- 2) Egypt's power waned under Atenism, but Seti I began restoring it, inheriting the throne ~1290 BC. Ramesses II “the Great”, inherited from Seti at age 24 in 1279 BC. He campaigned very hard north of Canaan until concluding **the world's first fully recorded peace treaty** in 1258 BC with the Hittite ruler Hattusili III, securing Egyptian Canaan. He expanded deeper into Nubia's south and west into Libya. He undertook unprecedented building campaigns, leaving lasting memorials throughout Egypt, and lived to age 90. He and his father's tombs each contained **The Book of the Heavenly Cow** which describes a “Fall of Man” due to early humans insulting their creator, Ra. Ramesses' successors were soon after fending off invasions of the Sea Peoples, regular famine, and the loss of Canaan and Nubia...

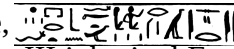


Assyrian expansion and hegemony in Mesopotamia and the Levant

- 1) Asshur-uballit I inherited Assyria ~1365 BC and married his daughter to the Kassite Babylonian king, but the Babylonians revolted. Assur-uballit crushed that rebellion and installed a new king. He conquered most Mitanni territory despite their alliance with the Hittites.
- 2) Shalmaneser I inherited Assyria ~1274 BC. He defeated the remaining Mittanni, conquered small nations to the north and east, and defeated the Hittites, which created a sizable empire. He claimed, as his father had, that the gods called him to war and also claimed to have blinded 14,400 captives in one eye. He deported captive enemies to new lands, disrupting their ethnicity and social identity. The Hittites allied with Babylonia and Egypt during his reign, but his son Tukulti-Ninurta I beat them decisively ~1237 BC, capturing the northern Levant and eastern Anatolia. Tukulti-Ninurta then turned south and conquered Babylonia, but his sons murdered him in ~1206 BC. Dynastic instabilities eroded Assyria, allowing Babylonia to reemerge. Ashur-Dan I took the throne ~1179 BC, retook northern Babylonia, won a war against the Elamites who had conquered southern Babylonia, and reigned until ~1133 BC.

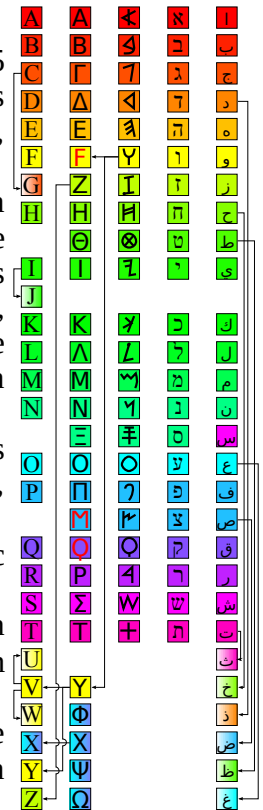
Bronze Age Collapse! – Near East

The collapse of Eastern Mediterranean culture and literacy

- 1) Between 1200 BC and 1150 BC, widespread catastrophe hit the Eastern Mediterranean, causing most governments in the area to fall. Nearly every city in Greece, the Aegean islands, Crete, Cyprus, Anatolia, western Syria, and the Levant were destroyed or abandoned and were often never occupied again. The Mycenaeans and the Hittites fell completely. There is no certain cause of all these events, but it resulted in a collapse of trade and led to a long period of depopulation and de-urbanization lasting centuries; Anatolia did not recover fully for 1,000 years. Literacy disappeared from Greece, the Aegean Sea, Anatolia, and the Levant for centuries and a Dark Age resulted.
- 2) The Egyptians fought hard to retain their power, stability, and territory. The **Merneptah Stele** ~1208 BC records victories of Merneptah against Libyans and the “Sea Peoples” who fought with them and against Canaanites, including this passage, , typically translated “**Israel** [a foreign people] is waste and his seed is not”, history’s first reference to them. Ramesses III inherited Egypt in 1186 BC and constantly defended Egyptian territory from invasion, including many sea battles. The “Peleset” people attacking Egypt in his time settled the southern Canaan coast, most likely becoming the later Philistines. Ramesses III had his throat cut in 1155 BC by associates of his wife who hoped to put her son on the throne instead of crown prince Ramesses IV, son of another royal wife. This conspiracy led to trials that condemned 38 people to death *and to a ruined afterlife*. After this, Egypt went into steady decline and divided into two nations again when Ramesses XI died in 1077, having lost control of Canaan and Nubia many decades before.

The continued energy of Assyria, new peoples and languages, the alphabet, and the slow spread of iron

- 1) As most of the powers around her collapsed, Assyria briefly expanded, with Tiglath-Pileser I taking the throne in 1115 BC and conquering many lands in Syria, Anatolia, Babylonia, and the Zagros mountains. His sons kept the conquests together for a time, but their reign ended in 1056 BC. Assyria retreated into its northern Mesopotamian homeland, repelled all invaders, and weathered the changes of the early Iron Age well.
- 2) The Phoenician alphabet came into heavy use in coastal Lebanon ~1050 BC and began spreading. It developed from the earlier Canaanite alphabet that appeared ~1200 BC, which *may* have derived from the Proto-Sinaitic script, the Proto-Byblian script, or the Ugaritic alphabet. Over the next two centuries, the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets all developed from this one. The Latin alphabet developed a couple of centuries afterwards from the Greek alphabet, the Arabic developed from the Aramaic later still, and the Cyrillic developed from the Greek even later. Most people on Earth now use an alphabet derived from the Phoenician. During the Iron Age, alphabetic writing paired with cheaper and easier writing materials, like papyrus and ink, to spread literacy. Scrolls replaced clay tablets.
- 3) The Phoenician cities of coastal Lebanon became major trading powers. They founded an early colony city on Cyprus and after 1000 BC, began to found cities in the western Mediterranean along the North African coast, western Sicily, Sardinia, and southern Iberia. They even founded a few cities on the Atlantic coastline of Iberia and North Africa!
- 4) Chaldeans moved into Babylonia and became dominant. Arameans spread into Syria and Lebanon and their Aramaic language became more and more widely spoken. Medes, Persians, and Parthians arrived in modern Iran.
- 5) Distinctive small walled villages *without pig bones* emerged in the mountainous hill country of inland southern Canaan as Israelite culture developed *not by conquest* as described in the **Book of Joshua**, but by slow recovery from cultural collapse, explained in ***The Bible Unearthed* by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman**.
- 6) The complex work of smelting iron developed from the Middle Bronze Age, but now the rare tin needed to make good bronze was no longer available. Iron metallurgy spread fast, as iron was much more readily available in much greater quantities *if* one mastered the difficulties of blacksmithing. Blacksmith gods proliferated too...



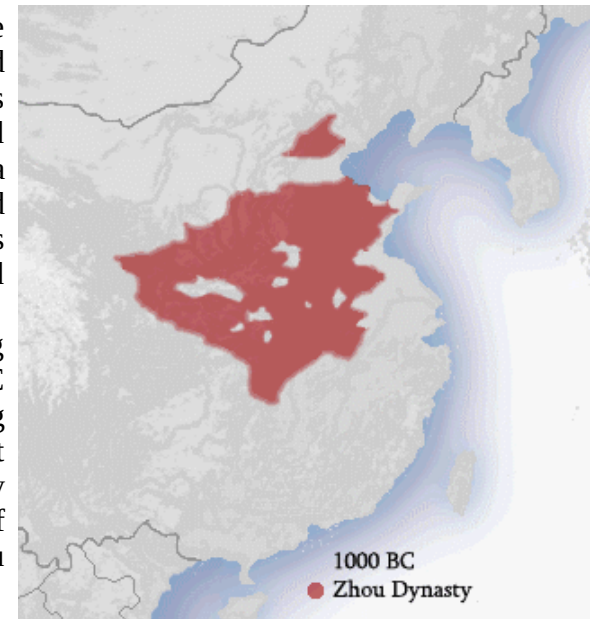
Bronze Age – South and East Asia

South Asia

- 1) The earliest farming village in South Asia was found at Mehrgarh, dating ~6500 BC. Bronze objects were in use by ~3300 BC and the Indus script, still undeciphered, dates from ~3500 BC. This Indus Valley (or Harappan) Civilization (IVC) spread throughout most of modern day Pakistan, northwestern India, and northeastern Afghanistan, with large and extraordinarily well organized urban centers flourishing from ~2600 BC. Goods with Indus script are found in Sumer and Egypt and the IVC contains Sumerian and early Egyptian artifacts as well, proving that widespread trade was *already* underway in the Early Bronze Age. The IVC shows signs of the earliest dentistry, extremely good weights and measures, and artworks that exceeded contemporary Egyptian and Sumerian work in many ways. Some precursors of Hindu imagery are seen in IVC imagery, but those interpretations are disputed. IVC cities contain no obvious temples or palaces, which has sparked much debate about the society's hierarchical make-up and worship patterns. A gradual decline began ~1900 BC and most IVC cities were abandoned by ~1700 BC. The cause of this collapse is disputed.
- 2) Scholars assume the early Aryan cultures associated with the composition of the Rigveda's Samhita hymns moved into the Indus Valley from Central Asia by ~1500 BC, with those hymns presumably achieving their "final" form ~1100 BC at the end of the Indian Bronze Age. As ironworking spread amongst the early Aryans, they moved east into the heavily forested western Ganges plain ~1000 BC.

East Asia

- 1) The world's first pottery came from central China ~19,000 years ago and neolithic farming villages appear in the Yellow River ~5000 BC. Bronze objects began appearing ~2800 BC in northwestern China, but are not found in the middle and lower Yellow River valley until ~2100 BC. Contemporary neolithic cultures in southern and eastern China have sophisticated pottery and show signs of engaging in ancestor worship. The Erlitou culture developed ~1750 BC, urbanized by ~1700 BC, and evolved into the Erligang culture ~1520 BC which began using bronze items more intensively; the Chinese often identify these cultures with traditional accounts of the Xia (Erlitou) and the early Shang Dynasties (Erligang), but no contemporary writing has been found to prove it.
- 2) Pan Geng ruled from ~1290 BC and moved the Shang capital to Yin. Readable contemporary records have been found on **oracle bone inscriptions** at Yinxu in Anyang and they largely agree with later Chinese accounts of the later Shang Dynasty. He was contemporary with Ramesses the Great and Shalmaneser I of Assyria. The Shang worshiped the highest god, *Di* (帝, usually depicted as a dragon and also called *Shangdi*, 上帝); a series of nature deities (such as the directions and their winds) who answered to *Di*; and their ancestors. The Shang founded their authority on direct descent from *Di*, inheriting his authority. They sacrificed animals and humans, particularly sacrificing young men and women to river deities, and also practiced divination, source of the **oracle bones**.
- 3) King Wu came from the west, upstream on the Yellow River, and defeated the Shang Dynasty ~1046 BC, founding the Zhou Dynasty. His son, King Cheng, inherited ~1043 BC and secured their rule. The Zhou reorganized Chinese religion around *Tian* (天, meaning "heaven(s)"), an impersonal and unknowable force. Dismissing Shang claims of descent from *Di* as the source of worldly authority, they claimed the Mandate of *Tian*, whereby those possessing the *moral authority* to rule gain power due to *Tian*'s favor, but will lose it if they fail to remain upright, and this *remains* the Chinese ideal of divine authority. The Zhou kings reigned over all China until ~770 BC and their era was later idealized.



The Assyrian Empire... and the fate of Judah

- 1) Adad-nirari II inherited the throne of Assyria in 911 BC and expanded his nation again, as did his next three successors. Tiglath-Pileser III reigned from 745 BC, introduced Aramaic as the language of the empire, entirely professionalized the military into a standing army, and accelerated the forced resettlement of conquered nations. His son, Shalmaneser V, conquered Samaria, capital city of the Kingdom of Israel, ~722 BC and relocated the royalty, the nobility, and much of the population.
- 2) King Hezekiah of Judah managed to save Jerusalem from Sennacherib's siege ~701 BC. Hezekiah carved the Siloam Tunnel – which still contains a contemporary inscription – beneath the city walls to a water well so as to better withstand sieges. The Biblical account of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem conflicts with Assyrian accounts, but Jerusalem became an Assyrian vassal and avoided Samaria's fate. The prophet Isaiah was an adviser to King Hezekiah and other Biblical prophets were also active at this time.
- 3) After Egypt lost Nubia, the Kingdom of Kush arose there by ~780 BC. Kashata of Kush conquered Upper Egypt ~755 BC, becoming the first black pharaoh, and his son, Piye, conquered Lower Egypt 727 BC, reunifying the nation for the first time in 250 years. Piye's son, Taharqa, went to war against Sennacherib, but was unable to prevent the Assyrians from taking most of southern Canaan. Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, invaded northern Egypt 671 BC and captured all of Lower Egypt; Esarhaddon's son, Ashurbanipal, conquered the rest of Egypt and pushed Taharqa all the way back into Kush 667 BC. The Assyrians installed a native Egyptian puppet pharaoh as governor.
- 4) Assyria ruled callously over the largest empire that had ever existed. Their subjects frequently rebelled, requiring repeated military action to reassert control. When Ashurbanipal died in 627 BC, his sons and other male relatives tore the empire apart competing with each other for the throne. Babylonia reasserted itself with a Chaldean ruler and the Medes and the Persians also reasserted themselves in Iran. Assyria's enemies seized their chance and began working together to overthrow Assyria entirely, sacking the capital in 612 BC. The Babylonians and the Medes carved up Assyria and created two new empires, with Babylon acquiring the lion's share.
- 5) The Egyptians attempted to assist the Assyrians, with Pharaoh Necho II leading a large army north in 609 BC. King Josiah of Judah, Hezekiah's great-grandson, sided against Assyria and attempted to stop Necho at Megiddo, but was killed in battle. Necho had no success in assisting Assyria, but stopped on the way back to unseat Judah's new king and place another son of Josiah as Egypt's puppet, as he had done throughout the Levant. Nebuchadnezzar inherited Babylon in 605 BC, defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, and captured the Levant from them. Egypt's "puppet" in Judah allied with Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar later sacked Jerusalem in 586 BC when its next king ignored the advice of the prophet Jeremiah and attempted an Egyptian alliance. This began **Judah's Babylonian Captivity**.

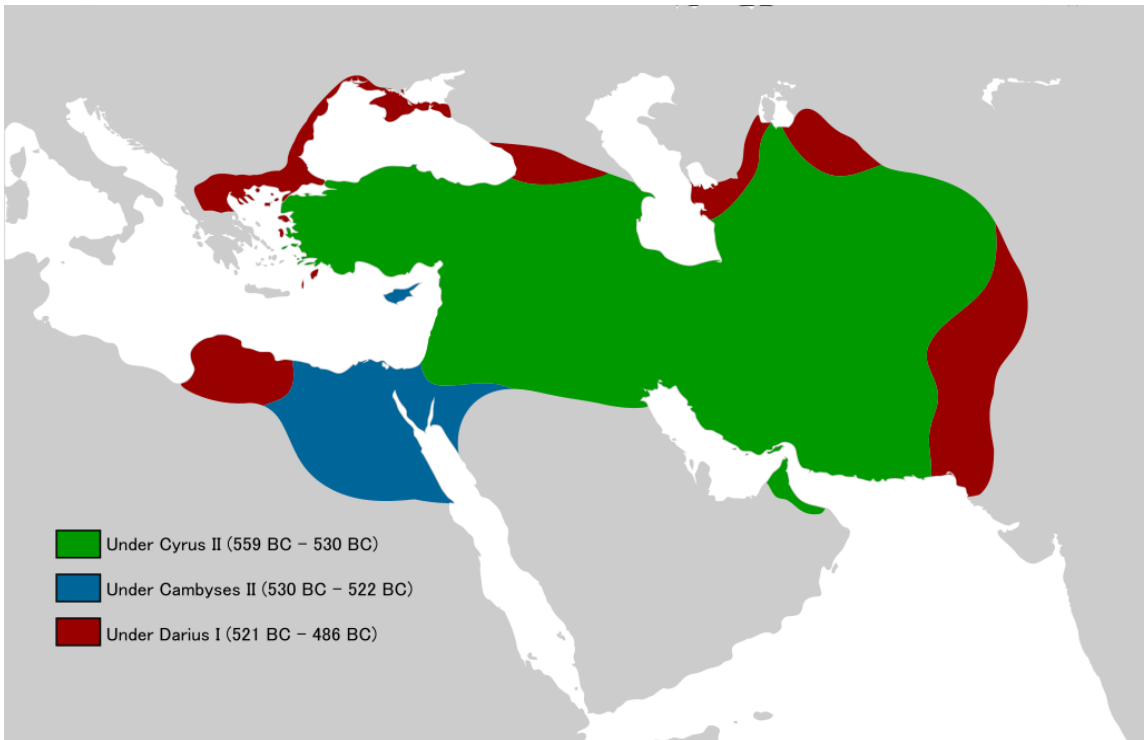


The Persian Empire & Zoroastrianism

1) Cyrus II “the Great” of Persia rebelled against the Median king in 553 and overthrew his empire in 550, conquered Anatolia in 547 BC, and vanquished the Babylonians in 539 BC, creating the largest empire the world had yet seen in 14 years. He spent the next decade of his reign campaigning to the east to incorporate all Iranian peoples into his new empire, dying in battle. Cyrus shrewdly garnered support for the new empire by allowing people relocated by the Assyrians and Babylonians to return to their homelands, restore their cultures, and freely practice their faiths. The **Book of Isaiah** calls him “messiah of God” for delivering the Jews from their Babylonian Captivity. Cyrus’ son, Cambyses II, conquered Egypt, Nubia, and Libya in 525 BC, but died soon afterwards. His “brother” took the throne, but was soon rumored to be an imposter.

2) Darius I “the Great”, killed the “pretender” to the throne in 522 BC and consolidated his rule as king in his first year. He was not descended from Cyrus and had to cultivate the support of the army to remain king. Darius campaigned and brought the empire to its maximum territorial size by 510 BC, but he failed against Greece. He minted the first gold coins, along with silver coins. He cited his devotion to Ahura Mazda in various inscriptions, which *may* indicate that he was a Zoroastrian. Darius ruled over *at least* 44% of the people on Earth, according to modern estimates. His son, Xerxes I, inherited the throne in 486 BC; Xerxes’ mother was a daughter of Cyrus the Great. Xerxes lost his own war with Greece in 479 BC and then devoted his reign to administration and extensive building projects.

3) Zoroastrianism’s scripture is the Avesta, written in the ancient East Iranian language called Avestan or Zend which is closely related to the Sanskrit of the Hindu Vedas. Zarathustra, an ancient Iranian prophet, first proclaimed the faith when he was about 30 years old. Zoroastrian tradition dates Zarathustra as being active ~580 BC, but scholars think he might date back as far as ~1200 BC; ancient Greek discussions of Zarathustra place him anywhere between ~6500 BC and ~525 BC. He had the support of his stalwart benefactor Vishtaspa. Zoroastrians taught that Ahura Mazda is the divine source of all goodness, leading the *yazatas*, but that Angra Mainyu was the demonic source of all evil leading the *daevas*. (In the Vedas, the devas are the good gods, but the asuras are often demonic.) The faith taught to seek out the truth and reject the lie. Zoroastrians preach choosing only good thoughts, words, and deeds. The world was created by Ahura Mazda, but corrupted by Angra Mainyu, and all good people must side with Ahura Mazda against Angra Mainyu. During the Persian Empire, Ahura Mazda was never visually depicted, but would be given an empty chariot to “ride” when the Persians went to war. Zoroastrians believe that Ahura Mazda will one day defeat Angra Mainyu, resurrect the dead, send everyone across the Bridge of Judgment, and that the good will achieve paradise while the bad will suffer fitting punishments until they are also purified for paradise.



The Axial Age – beginnings of Judaism

King Josiah and the Deuteronomic Reform

King Josiah's history is found in **2 King 22-23** and is repeated with some variation in **2 Chronicles 34-35**, which scholars usually regard as written later than **2 Kings**. Josiah is *the most praised king* in the **Books of Samuel** and the **Books of Kings**, except *perhaps* for King David. He inherited the throne aged 8 after his father's assassination ~640 BC. His first act on reaching adulthood was to renovate the temple ~650 BC, during which the book of **Torah** was discovered. The prophetess Huldah pronounced it genuine, but also said Judah was doomed for centuries of impiety. Josiah's zeal possessed him. He led the people in reading the Torah and then demanded all objects devoted to other gods be removed from Solomon's Temple, defiled, burned, crushed to dust, and disposed. He led a campaign to creatively defile and destroy *all* places of worship in Judah, save the Temple... even going so far as to murder the priests of these now illegal worship sites and then burn them on their own altars alongside the exhumed remains of their predecessors! He ordered that all Judah should keep the Passover feast... which apparently had not been celebrated "since the time of the Judges" 350 years earlier!!!! Many scholars believe the **Torah originates** from the "Deuteronomic Reforms" and that they constitute the true beginning of fully monotheistic Judaism. Others argue the archaeological evidence implies the religious sites of Judah were destroyed during Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem ~701 BC, never to be rebuilt again, and attributing this to Josiah's zeal constitutes a latter-day revisionism. However things occurred, the triumphalist rhetoric of the Bible about this story echoes the boasts made by Assyria and Babylon about the potency of Ashur and Marduk, but also echoes the lamentations genre going back to Sumerian literature of the late Akkadian Empire.

The Babylonian Captivity and Yehud Medinata

- 1) Most secular scholars concur that Judean scribes compiled, redacted, and copied the **Torah**, **Nevi'im Rishonim**, and *partial* versions of the **Nevi'im Aharonim** sections of the Hebrew Bible (as well as much of the **Book of Psalms**) during the Babylonian Captivity, but no detailed theory of composition has widespread support after variations on the Documentary Hypothesis multiplied. This early "Babylonian Bible" might have differed from our current version. The daily language shifted from Hebrew to Aramaic for the Judean exiles, leaving Hebrew an increasingly sacred and revered language of worship and literature. How much the Judean scribes might have referred to Aramaic, or even Akkadian, records and literature of Mesopotamia when compiling Genesis is disputed. The god of the Bible is often seen as aloof in the heavens – as Anu – or triumphal, kingly, and punitive – as Ellil, Ashur, or Marduk – but he also absorbs most of the specific myths of Ea: creating men and women from clay, saving humans from the Flood, confusing languages, and serving human well being more so than other gods. Whether the Bible's stories were adapted from earlier southern Canaanite myths, Mesopotamian myths, or a hybrid is probably unknowable, but records from Jerusalem and Samaria were probably sparse.
- 2) After Cyrus' conquest of Babylonia in 538 BC, he created a policy of allowing most of those forced to migrate by the Assyrians and Babylonians to return home, rebuild their temples, and restore their cultures. The **Cyrus Cylinder**, found in the foundations of the Marduk Temple in Babylon, records Cyrus' promises to do such for the Babylonians and Assyrians. The Bible claims to record a similar grant of liberty to resettle Judah and rebuild Jerusalem to the Jews. The new **Yehud Medinata** (Judah Province) became the place where the world's first Abrahamic monotheism took root, built its temple, and began to operate as the state religion of a people. The Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah recount this period, when the slow trickle of Jews back to Judah and the slow process of rebuilding the temple takes root. The Jewish priesthood, the Kohanim, is restored completely, but the Davidic royal family is not, leading to messianism.



The Axial Age – Classical Greece

Early Greek philosophy

- 1) Thales of Miletus is considered the first Greek philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer. He predicted an eclipse on May 28th, 585 BC and taught all things are fundamentally made of water. His student, Anaximander, recorded all this, but also taught the Earth floated in space as the *center* of a universe governed by natural laws of opposites working on an unlimited featureless substance. His student, Anaximenes, felt that air is the fundamental substance. Heraclitus of Ephesus taught fire as the fundamental substance, causing all things to ceaselessly change. Pythagoras of Samos taught numbers as the fundamental reality, believed souls reincarnated, and emphasized strict behavioral self-control. Much later, many believed the gods revealed philosophy to Pythagoras first of all, but his school died out by 350 BC. These earliest philosophers all came from the Ionian coast of Anatolia within thirty miles of one another.
- 2) Parmenides of Elea taught everything is one, multitude and change are illusion. Zeno of Elea defended this, creating paradoxes intended to show that any change or multiplicity is contradictory. Empedocles synthesized Ionian and Eleatic philosophies, teaching in his poem ***On Nature*** that there are four *unchanging* “roots” of all things – water, air, fire, and earth – driven by the pervasive, opposing powers of affection and antagonism to produce combination and motion. These philosophers all came from Greek cities in southern Italy.
- 3) Democritus, born ~460 BC and Leucippus’ student, taught everything is made of *atoms* – indestructable particles – moving through an infinite void. All physical qualities are only *perceptions*, as only atoms and the void are real. He believed there are infinite worlds, arising and dispersing randomly, and that our Earth is one of them. He discovered cones or pyramids have 1/3 the volume of their corresponding cylinders or prisms. He thought Athenian democracy was the best government, all free men should be equal, the rich should respect and help the needy to preserve general good will, contentment results from moderation, and cultivating cheerfulness improves satisfaction.
- 4) In the midst of this intellectual ferment, Cleisthenes led the Athenians in opposing Isagoras, who had Sparta’s help in maintaining his power, and managed to expell Isagoras in 506 BC helped by Athens’ citizens. Cleisthenes proceeded to reform government, introducing egalitarian institutions that *required* all free male citizens to participate. The Persian Empire tried to invade and subdue Greece in 490 BC, originally to prevent Greek meddling in the affairs of Anatolia’s Ionian Coast. The Persians were beaten by the Spartan army. Later, the Athenian navy beat Persia in 479 BC, leaving Athens the master of the Aegean. They led a league of Ionian cities, encouraging democracy and trade. War broke out with Sparta in 431 BC, which the Athenians ultimately lost in 403 BC, bringing ancient democracy to an end.
- 5) Socrates of Athens, born ~470 BC, is credited with originating the *dialectic method* of philosophy. He liked to question people in discussions on deep topics and follow up with more probing questions, often trying to undermine their initial beliefs by leading them to examine their ideas *very* thoroughly. He was obsessed with discovering true virtue, engaging in continuous discussion about the problems of ethics. He always denied having wisdom or knowledge, but was admired for his insights. He was a veteran of the Peloponnesian War. Many were incensed by Socrates constant questioning and controversial ideas, as he would often praise the enemies of Athens or question the value of democracy. He was arrested and put on trial, convicted of corrupting young men and disbelief in the gods, and sentenced to death by drinking poison in 399 BC. He wrote nothing and was illiterate, but he is the primary character in all the dialogues of his student Plato and a few dialogues of Xenophon. Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius also describe him. He is an icon of intellectual freedom and seen as *the* key founder of Western philosophy.



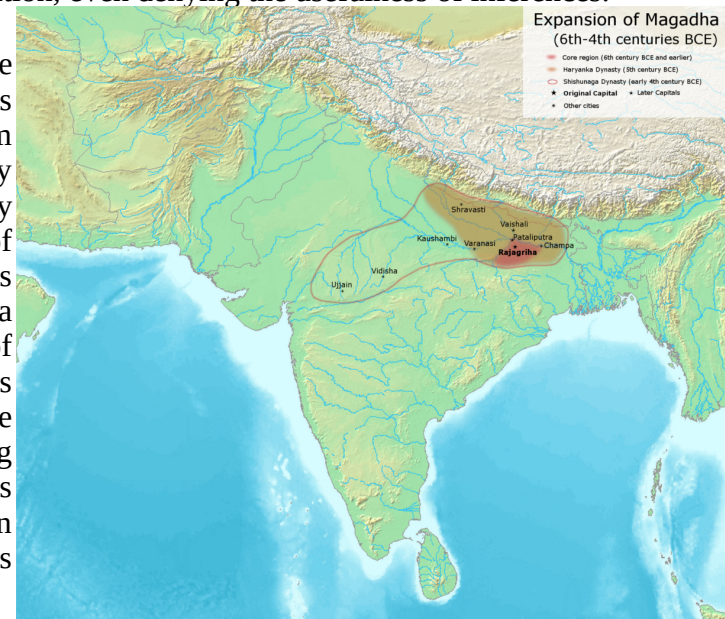
The Axial Age – India

Development of Indian philosophies and faiths

- 1) Agricultural kingdoms adhering to the rituals of the Vedas emerge in India ~1000 BC. Hereditary *varnas* were the basis of the social organization: *brahmin* (priests and ritualists), *kshatriya* (warrior), *vaishya* (merchant), and *shudra* (worker). The shramanya (ascetic) practitioners began to become more important and their teachings often disregarded the Vedas and the distinctions of varna entirely.
- 2) The brahmins who memorized Vedas developed more philosophical Vedic texts, the **Upanishads**. These texts incorporated Shramanic insights into orthodox Vedic understandings, beginning the evolution of Vedic religion into the multitude of theological and philosophical outlooks making up the many varieties of modern Hinduism. The earthy Samhita hymns of the Rigveda began to be interpreted in very symbolic, non-literal fashions while insights from the intricate theologies and paradoxes of the Upanishads became part of popular faith.
- 3) Urban centers reemerged in India ~600 BC as the kingdoms consolidated and diversified, with Magadha emerging as the most powerful.
- 4) Mahavira founded the shramanic Jainism ~550 BC. His teachings put extensive emphasis on *ahimsa* (“harmlessness”), non-absolute belief that tolerates difference, and non-attachment to things and desires. The basic ethical demands are to minimize the harm one causes, tell the truth, take nothing not offered, be chaste, and avoid needless attachments. Gods don’t matter. Jain monks renounce *everything*, even clothes, and have been known to sometimes fast to death. Practicing these austerities can rid one’s soul of karma and the body, cease one’s reincarnations, and grant eternal bliss. These very high moral demands proved very influential on later Indian faiths.
- 5) Ajivika branched off from Jainism. They taught that the enlightenment of the soul happens to everyone, but that it will happen deterministically in accordance with fate and one can take no action to hasten one’s own enlightenment. They did not believe in karma, but did preach ahimsa and the moral life as the least troubling and they did live monastic lifestyles. They taught an atomic theory.
- 6) Charvakas taught naturalism and atheism, denying karma, souls, reincarnation, and supernatural beliefs of all kinds as the most atheistic school amongst ancient philosophies. Their writings have all been lost, but their critics claim they taught the indulgence of sense pleasures should not be avoided and that all knowledge only comes from observation, even denying the usefulness of inferences.

Early Buddhism

Buddha was a younger contemporary of Mahavira. The Buddhists and Jains share many doctrines, but the Buddha taught that extreme asceticism undermines spiritual life and instead preached a “middle way” between extreme asceticism and regular life. He summarized his doctrine: life is stressful, stress is caused by craving, stress ends if craving is eliminated, and craving is eliminated by discerning the truth, acting on it, behaving morally, and diligent practice of insightful meditation. He taught that there are no souls and everything is impermanent. According to Buddhist scriptures, King Bimbisara of Magadha protected and sponsored the Buddha and the Buddha seems to have spent most of his time in that kingdom. Buddhists pledge themselves to follow the Buddha, his teachings, and the enlightened monastic community he founded. The moral code is similar to Jainism, but pledges to avoid intoxicants instead of avoiding attachments. Buddhists are less strict about vegetarian diet than Jains and monks are allowed plain saffron robes, a food bowl, and a firm pillow on which to sit in meditation. They teach that if a god believes itself to be the creator god, then it is just another deluded being, and all gods are impermanent too.



The Axial Age – China

Spring and Autumn Period

- 1) The Zhou King moved east down the Yellow River to escape foreign invasion of his capital in the west ~771 BC. After the move, the king was increasingly marginalized as a figurehead as each nobleman increasingly ruled his own area as an independent country. Over the next two centuries, the nobility developed their holdings into a series of well-run states and took turns as unofficial “hegemon” over the rest. Then, some of the ruling nobles began to act as figureheads to *their* nobles, who began dividing the larger states into areas of influence amongst themselves. Warfare between the states of China became increasingly common after 590 BC. Sun Tzu’s **Art of War** was written during his time working as a general for the King of Wu ~500 BC.
- 2) Confucius was made the effective prime minister of Lu in 499 BC, but lost the position two years later. He pursued other positions for a time, but ultimately decided to teach instead. He is thought to have edited the Five Classics: **Classic of Poetry**, **Book of Documents**, **Book of Rites**, **I Ching**, and **Spring and Autumn Anals**. Later, the Four Books were added as key Confucian texts: **Great Learning**, **Doctrine of the Mean**, **Analects**, and **Mencius**. Confucius emphasized duty to family, ancestor worship, moral behavior, the cultivation of knowledge and self-improvement, sincerity, and justice. He taught the Golden Rule *and* the Silver Rule. He thought deeply about what government is best, feeling a government that cultivates a strong sense of responsibility is far superior to one that simply enforces laws. Confucius opposed democracy, as he felt only those of sufficient moral character and understanding could properly rule by example. He lionized the earlier Zhou dynasty’s emphasis on the Mandate of *Tian*, desiring the virtuous ruler who could fulfill it.
- 3) The Legalists felt human nature flawed and selfish, so effective enforcement of good draconian laws was their key to good government.
- 4) Taoism was a philosophy rooted in the **Dao De Jing & Zhuangzi**. They use paradoxical language to convey the value of harmony, naturalness, doing without doing. Their cardinal virtues are compassion, moderation, and humility. Taoism absorbed the Naturalist schools’ emphasis on the forces of yin and yang interacting through the five elements – water, fire, wood, metal, and earth. Their emphasis on individual fulfillment and flow led to them becoming a more monastic faith in response to Buddhism later.
- 5) Mohism emphasized compassion without favoritism and utilitarian ethics. Their ideas were eventually absorbed by Taoism.

Chinese Empire – Qin Dynasty

- 1) Shang Yang implemented a set of harsh Legalist reforms in the state of Qin from 356 BC. They made Qin the most centralized and powerful state in China, but Shang and his entire family were slaughtered in 338 BC after the new king inherited the throne and resented the punishments Shang had visited on himself in the past – yet he did not revert Shang’s reforms
- 2) King Zheng of Qin conquered all of China in 221 BC and created the new title of Emperor (皇帝 *Huang-Di*) for himself. In 213 BC, the new Emperor chose to burn the books of non-Legalist philosophies, and in 210 BC, he is reputed to have had 260 Confucian scholars buried alive. He was very successful in eliminating the books of the Mohists! He died later that year.
- 3) The new emperor, Qin Er Shi, proved very punitive. He was killed in a palace coup in 207 BC. The Qin Dynasty fell.



Alexander and the Hellenistic world

Alexander the Great

Alexander of Macedon blazed out of Greece in 334 BC, dying in 323 BC as the greatest conqueror the world had ever known. Without established heirs, his empire was carved up by his generals. Seleucus eventually unified nearly all of Alexander's Asian conquests into a new empire, building capital cities at Antioch and Seleucia. Ptolemy declared himself pharaoh in Egypt in 305 BC, building Alexandria as his capital. Macedonia retained its independence.



Hellenistic Era philosophy

- 1) Aristotle studied at Plato's Academy for two decades. He was appointed the tutor to young Alexander of Macedon in 343 BC and later founded the Lyceum. He systematically wrote on every subject of his era, setting a standard for the ages. He taught philosophy begins with *facts* and he often compiled and described much more detail about nature than other philosophers, but he was pre-scientific in attributing "purpose" as a primary *cause* of phenomena, echoing Plato's Forms, and in teaching mind/matter duality. He based ethics on the cultivation of sensible virtues as the median between unhealthy extremes of behavior. He was often called THE Philosopher and he remains influential.
- 2) The Stoics taught all things are really just one god. Emotional control and fortitude in suffering foster acceptance of god's will, peace of mind, and happiness, leading an unbiased sage to clearly discern the truth and accept fate. They pioneered propositional logic.
- 3) The Skeptics taught that nothing at all could be known, but that acceptance of this could bring peace of mind.
- 4) Epicurus developed Democritus' atomism in response to objections to it, paired it with a demanding hedonistic ethic that emphasized devoted friendships and the absence of pain as the highest pleasures, and created a theology of detached self-sufficient gods who model serene happiness for all. He founded a school around ~307 BC noted for the affection and friendliness of its diverse membership. While less detailed than Aristotle in collecting facts, Epicurean scientific theory strongly foreshadows modern scientific findings.
- 5) Plato's Academy felt all things are but shadows of the perfect Forms. The school became more mystical and transcendental with time.

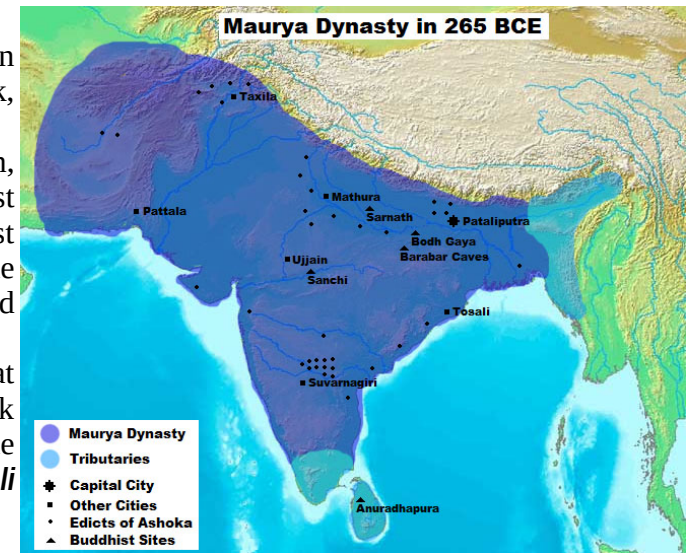
Parthian Empire of Iran

The Parthian Empire began in northeastern Iran and slowly conquered the Seleucids from the East, finally pressing them into their Syrian strongholds by 129 BC. The Parthians continued the religious syncretism of Hellenism and were not officially Zoroastrian, but they supported that faith as it fragmented into a number of regional sects. Their new capitol, Ctesiphon, was across the Tigris River from Seleucia and these twin cities were the new center of culture in Mesopotamia and Iran. They were eventually the eastern archrival of Rome.

Buddhism in early classical India and Han China

Maurya Empire and the sponsorship of Buddhism

- 1) Chandragupta Maurya expanded Magadha into the first northern Indian empire in ~323 BC, pushing the Greeks back west. He abdicated, became a skyclad Jain monk, and eventually starved himself to death. His son did not share that faith...
- 2) His grandson, Ashoka, took the throne ~268 BC. He conquered through Afghanistan, left **monumental pillars** throughout his empire that preached Buddhism, the earliest Indian inscriptions since the Indus Valley Civilization, and he sponsored Buddhist missions to central Asia, “Greece,” Southeast Asia, and Sri Lanka after convening the third Buddhist council ~250 BC. The Mauryas declined after Ashoka’s reign and shrank back into Magadha. India was not nearly united again until the Delhi Sultans.
- 3) Buddhism thrived particularly thoroughly in Sri Lanka, where tradition records that King Tissa converted to Buddhism ~240 BC guided by the fully enlightened monk Mahinda, Ashoka’s eldest son, and the island became almost entirely Buddhist. The Theravada fourth Buddhist council convened in Sri Lanka ~25 BC to record the **Pali Cannon** on palm leaf manuscripts, eventually spreading it throughout Southeast Asia.



Emergence of Mahayana

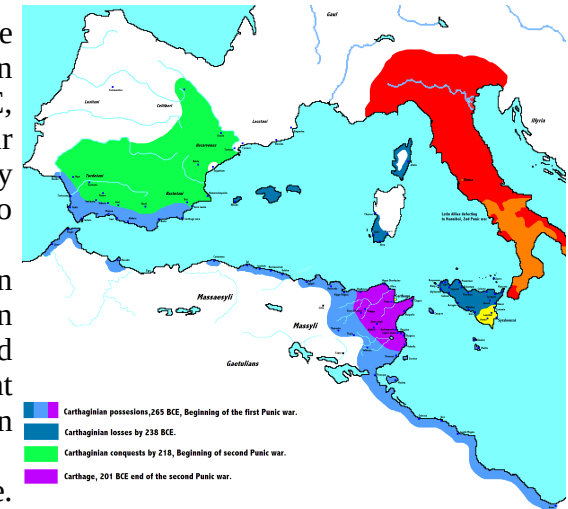
- 1) Mahayana Buddhism developed from ~90 BC and spread north from the southern Satavahana Empire. New scriptures claimed to reveal Buddha’s *secret* teachings hidden for later ages. They eventually taught the Bodhisattva ideal, the “emptiness” of all things, worship of “celestial” Buddhas, and that we all have “Buddha nature”. Mahayana became the predominant Buddhism of the Indo-Scythians of northwestern India and central Asia.
- 2) The Kushan tribe of the Yuezhi consolidated their power in central Asia by 30 and expanded steadily towards both India and China. Kanishka I assumed the throne in 127 and expanded over nearly all of northern India and also into the Tarim Basin north of Tibet. Trade between India and China further expanded, enriching the Kushans.
- 3) Kanishka adhered to Mahayana Buddhism and convened the Mahayana fourth Buddhist council of Kashmir, which ultimately produced the **Mahavibhassa Shastra** and began the process of translating Mahayana Buddhist scriptures into the classical Sanskrit language.

Han China

- 1) The Han dynasty of China succeeded the brief Qin dynasty in 206 BC. Emperor Wu reigned from 141 BC to 87 BC. He pushed back the Xiongnu in the north, sponsored Confucianist bureaucratic training, and expanded China to the eastern Tarim Basin, northern Vietnam, and northern Korea. The majority in China are still called “Han people”.
- 2) Buddhism entered China by 65 via the Kushans and members of the Han royal family adopted the new faith. The Chinese translated Mahayana Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit using Taoist terminology, beginning a long process of syncretising the two faiths...

End of the Hellenistic era and the rise of Rome

- 1) Carthage (modern Tunis), founded as a colony of Phoenician Tyre, dominated most of the western Mediterranean by 300 BC, having taken control of the other former Phoenician colonies and many former Greek colonies. After a huge loss to Roman legions in 262 BC, Carthage tried dominating Rome at sea. The Romans responded by rapidly building up their own navy and taking Sicily in 241 BC. Hannibal later invaded Italy in 218 BC, beating many Roman legions and staying in Italy for over fifteen years, but was defeated on his return to Africa. Rome obliterated Carthage in 146 BC, leaving no western Mediterranean rivals.
- 2) By 250 BC, speakers of Celtic languages dominated the British Isles, most of the Iberian peninsula, Gaul, the Alps, and the Danube watershed, but left few inscriptions. Some lived in walled cities, but most in smaller settlements. Ennobled equestrians and a priestly class called druids led them and bards were also very influential. Romans later claimed the druids taught reincarnation and that knowledge should not be written. Rome defeated an alliance of Celts in northern Italy in 225 BC. Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in 52 BC; druids were soon outlawed.
- 3) The Macedonians backed Hannibal's invasion of Italy, but Rome fought off their interference. Soon after Hannibal's defeat, Rome warred against Macedonia to block their alliance with the Seleucids and won in 196 BC, declaring Greece "free". The Romans battled the Seleucids directly, winning in 190 BC and triggering the slow disintegration of their empire. Antiochus IV nearly conquered Ptolemaic Egypt in 168 BC, but Rome stopped him, further weakening the Seleucids. More wars with Macedonia and the Greeks lead the Romans to annex Greece after sacking Corinth in 146 BC. Greek culture soon captivated Rome...
- 4) Ptolemaic Egypt annexed the southern Levant in 301 BC and Jews thrived as Ptolemaic subjects. Alexandrian Jews translated their scriptures into the Greek **Septuagint**. The Seleucids captured Judea in 200 BC. Antiochus pillaged Jerusalem in 168 BC, responding to a rebel high priest, and supported the new high priest in introducing Greek idols into the Temple. Jewish priest Mattathias the Hasmonean killed a Jew offering to a Greek idol, sparking a rebellion. Mattathias' son Simon Maccabee became king of Judea in 141 BC, allied with Rome, and made peace with the fading Seleucids. Judea expanded aggressively for a century, but was subjugated by Rome in 37 BC.
- 5) Octavian, heir of Julius Caesar, defeated Cleopatra and Anthony and annexed Ptolemaic Egypt in 30 BC, completing Roman conquest of the Mediterranean. He also conquered all lands south of the Danube. He took the name Augustus Caesar, which became the new imperial title, and the Senate declared him Princeps, the "first" citizen. For the next two centuries, economic expansion and relative peace *mostly* prevailed while the new emperors retained Augustus' model of modest "republican" dictatorship devoid of royal honors. All Roman subjects respected the Emperor's cult as a patriotic duty, excepting Jews, but there were few other religious expectations.
- 6) Roman society was contemptuous of the new Christian assemblies formed by the evangelism and epistles of Saul of Tarsus. If someone was accused of being Christian, they were required to pray to the emperor's *genius* and offer it incense as a proof of loyalty and piety. Committed Christians would refuse and be punished, sometimes harshly. This was not at all consistently enforced, but the sacrifices of pious Christians created stories of martyrdom that encouraged the committed faithful. **The Rise of Christianity by sociologist Rodney Stark** argues that Christianity spread most effectively as a purity movement among educated Greek speakers in the eastern Roman Empire. The new Christian churches organized hierarchically very early, mirroring the official organization of the empire itself.
- 7) After a Jewish revolt, Emperor Vespasian's son and successor Titus led the Jerusalem siege, sacking the city in 70. Hadrian decided to build Aelia Capitolina over the former Jerusalem, beginning in 130. Bar Kokhba revolted, but was killed in 133. A temple of Jupiter was put on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Jews were only allowed in the city on Tisha B'Av. The Pharisees rose to be the prevalent Jewish sect.



Crises of the third century

Sasanian Empire of Iran

Ardashir I rises in southwestern Iran and breaks away from the Parthians in 224. The Parthians attempt to reconquer the region, but instead Ardashir conquers the Parthian Empire and begins the new Sasanian era. He turned to the Zoroastrian priest Tansar to legitimate his rule. The **Letter of Tansar** was sent out across the empire, in which Tansar explained that the Parthian era had been corrupt and heretical, but that Ardashir was restoring the true faith. Zoroastrianism quickly became the official state religion of the Sasanians. Ardashir's son and successor Shapur I appointed Katir as the "priest of priests" over the Zoroastrian faith. Hellenistic worship was banned and all places of worship were converted to Zoroastrian fire temples or destroyed. Katir was probably involved in instigating the execution of the heretic Mani, the prophet of the Manichean faith. Katir served under numerous kings and remained head of the Zoroastrian faith for the rest of his life, receiving a king's burial. Iran remained thoroughly monotheistic from this time.

Fall of the Han dynasty, the Satavahana, the Kushans... and the rise of the Jin dynasty

- 1) The Kushans lost Bactria to the Sasanians in 230 and became Sassanid vassals in the Punjab. In central India, the Satavahana kingdom broke up, and a few decades later, the Vakatakas began expanding into the power vacuum on the Deccan Plateau that followed.
- 2) Zhang Jue and his brothers began the Yellow Turban Rebellion against the Han in 184, creating the first form of Huang-Lao Taoism which encouraged the confession of sins, preached millennialism, proclaimed Zhang Jue's healing powers, and practiced frequent group rituals. Their rebellion folded by 205 at *great* cost to the Han and contributed to the rise of warlords. In Hanzhong, a small strict Taoist state ruled by hereditary Tianshi ("Celestial Master") Zhang Lu operated independently of the Han until 215, preaching that immortality was possible with control of *chi* aided by sexual restraint and requiring *documented* spiritual progress from their citizen-adherents. These two strict revolutionary movements marked the beginning of religious Taoism. Cao Cao incorporated both into his new Kingdom of Wei.
- 3) The Han dynasty collapsed in 220, succeeded by the Three Kingdoms of Cao Wei, Eastern Wu, and Shu Han. Wei conquered Shu in 263, the Jin dynasty overthrew the weak Cao rulers of Wei in 264, and the Jin reunified China by conquering Wu in 280.

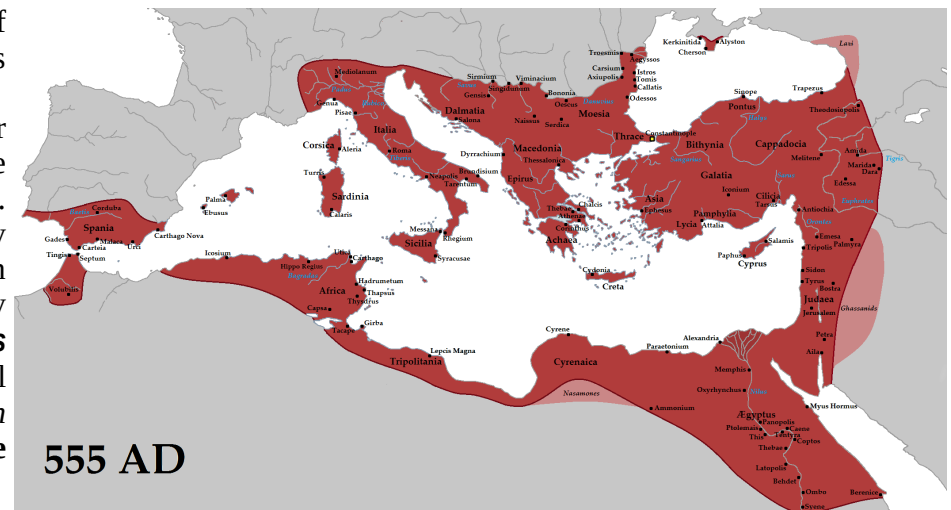
Crisis of the Roman Empire

Rome nearly splintered permanently in 235 as army generals killed the emperor and began competing for power. There was briefly a Gallic Empire in the west and a Palmyrene Empire, ruled by Empress Zenobia, based in Syria. During this period, many Roman cities were destroyed, cities built previously unneeded high defensive walls, and the economy stagnated. Emperor Aurelian reconquered the break-aways in 274, but the problems with imperial succession resolved more fully when Emperor Diocletian rose in 284. Diocletian dispensed with most of the republican institutions of Rome, expanded the bureaucracy, and named a co-augustus and two junior ceasars to run the empire with him. In 303, Diocletian and his co-rulers banned Christianity and began trying to exterminate the faith via genocide. Galerius relented in 311 and issued an **Edict of Toleration**, legalizing Christianity.



Constantine, his heirs, and Roman Christendom

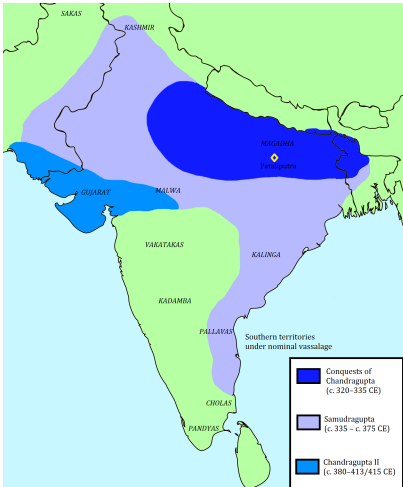
- 1) Constantine was the son of one of Diocletian's ceasars and his mother was quietly a Christian all along. He issued the **Edict of Milan** with his co-augustus in 313, ending the persecution of Christians in areas that Galerius' previous edict did not reach and reaffirming the faith's legalization. Constantine defeats his co-augustus in 324 to become sole Emperor of Rome. He promotes Christians in the bureaucracy and takes an active role in the faith, sponsoring the First Council of Nicaea in 325 to decide matters of Christian doctrine. He moves the capital of the empire to Constantinople, a Christian city. The emperor was baptized on his deathbed and all his heirs were Christians...
- 2) except... Julian "the Apostate", half-nephew of Constantine, became emperor in 361 and attempted to reinstate "Hellenism" as the state religion of Rome. He did not physically persecute Christians, but he did disadvantage them severely in education, the bureaucracy, and other institutions. He had been raised a Christian, but became extremely hostile to the faith in reaction to the machinations of his family and the turbulence of the empire. He died in battle against the Sasanians two years into his reign and was the last non-Christian emperor.
- 3) Theodosius I took the throne in 379 and issued the **Edict of Thessalonica** in 380, making Christianity the state church of the Roman Empire, and sponsored the First Council of Constantinople in 381. He passed laws to further criminalize the old pagan faiths and did not punish open violence against pagan commoners or their sanctuaries, as when the Ptolemaic Serapeum of Alexandria was destroyed in 391. He died in 395 leaving the Eastern Roman Empire to his eldest son and the Western Roman Empire to his younger son; the two halves were never again united by a single emperor. Platonic philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria lost her life to a Christian mob in 415.
- 4) Theodosius II, grandson of the first, sponsored the Council of Ephesus in 431, which declared the Virgin Mary "the Mother of God". The Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the bishop of the capital of the Sasanian Empire, refused to recognize this council and broke with the Roman church, but this may have been done in part to satisfy the Sasanian rulers that they were loyal citizens. This church *still exists* as the modern **Assyrian Church of the East**, with a few hundred thousand members mostly in northern Iraq and the western coast of India.
- 5) Marcian, son of Theodosius II, sponsored the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and vindicated Pope Leo I. The Coptic-speaking Pope of Alexandria, the Aramaic-speaking Patriarch of Antioch, and the Armenian-speaking Catholicos of All Armenians rejected this council. Ethnic politics contributed to the split, but Antioch and Armenia both bordered the now fiercely Zoroastrian Sasanian Empire and the Egyptians had felt slighted by Greeks at the council. These churches form **Oriental Orthodoxy**, which includes the Church of Ethiopia.
- 6) The western half of the Roman Empire fell in 476 to Odoacer of the Ostrogoths. For a half century, the Pope of Rome was on his own... but the popes also began administering Rome for others.
- 7) Justinian I took the throne in 527. He managed to reconquer Italy, southern Spain, and most of North Africa. This brought the Pope of Rome back under imperial authority and "protection". Justinian closed the ancient Academy of Athens in 529, zealously enforced the erasure of paganism from his entire empire, even in private homes, executed unrepentant pagans, and essentially ended all ancient philosophical inquiry. He published the **Corpus Juris Civilis** in 529, the first codification of **civil law**. Continental Europe and most former European colonies *not ruled by Britain* are grounded in the civil law tradition (including **Louisiana state law**). He called the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.



The Indian Golden Age and Tang China

Instability of Jin China and reunification under the Sui

- 1) The Jin dynasty lost the north from 304 as kingdoms began to break away, inaugurating the “Sixteen Kingdoms” era. The Jin disliked Huang-Lao and Tianshi Taoisms known for late Han revolutionary fervor, but strongly supported Xuanxue Taoism and works like Ge Hong’s *Baopuzi* which defended imperial authority. As the Jin lost the north, the new kingdoms rising there often embraced Buddhism wholeheartedly and spread it widely. The Jin held on to southern China until conquered by the Liu Song in 420.
- 2) The Northern Wei reunited northern China in 439, beginning the “Northern and Southern Dynasties” era where two or three separate dynasties ruled China, none able to conquer all. Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei, who led the northern reunification, faced a Buddhist-led rebellion in 446 and found weapons in Buddhist temples. He slaughtered Buddhist monks and attempted to eliminate Chinese Buddhism, privileging Tianshi Taoism, but was assassinated in 452. Emperor Wu of Liang took the throne of southern China in 502 and lavished Buddhist monasteries with donations until dying in 549. Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou assessed the faiths of northern China in 574. He chose Confucianism, banned Taoism and Buddhism, ordered the end of monasticism, but this ended when he died in 578.
- 3) The Sui dynasty usurped the Northern Zhou in 581 and conquered the Chen in the south in 589, ending three centuries of disunity. Emperor Wen presented himself as a virtuous Buddhist monarch in the mold of Ashoka and heavily promoted and sponsored Buddhism. Tiantai Buddhism, a Vajrayana sect, was founded by Zhiyi during the Sui, marking the emergence of the first Chinese form of Buddhism.



Gupta Empire to Harsha (and in the Deccan, Vakatakas to early Chalukyas)

- 1) Chandragupta I expanded from Magadha ~320 and his heirs conquered northern India, but the Vakatakas remained intact on the Deccan Plateau and the two dynasties intermarried. Both sponsored Mahayana Buddhist and Jain monasteries, but Hinduism began emerging from the ritualistic Vedic religion. The **Puranas**, fundamental to later Hinduism, began to be written. The Chinese Buddhist monk Faxian wrote of traveling from 399 to 412 through the Tarim Basin and into Gupta India, visiting the sites of Buddha's life. He went on to Sri Lanka, returning to southern China via the sea with Buddhist scriptures and sacred art.
- 2) Hephthalites invaded from central Asia in 480, overrunning the Gupta Empire by 500. They were expelled in 528 by a coalition of Indian rulers. Similarly, the Vakatakas were displaced by the Vishnukundina in 514, themselves displaced by the Chalukya in 616; the latter two supported Hinduism over Buddhism.
- 3) Harsha united northern India in 606, wrote plays, and sponsored both Shaivism and Buddhism. Pilgrim monk Xuanzang left Tang China in 629 via the Tarim Basin, arrived in Harsha's capitol in 635, and returned to the Chinese capitol in 645, all mythologized in the novel **Journey to the West** printed in 1592.

Tang dynasty of China and the Tibetan Empire

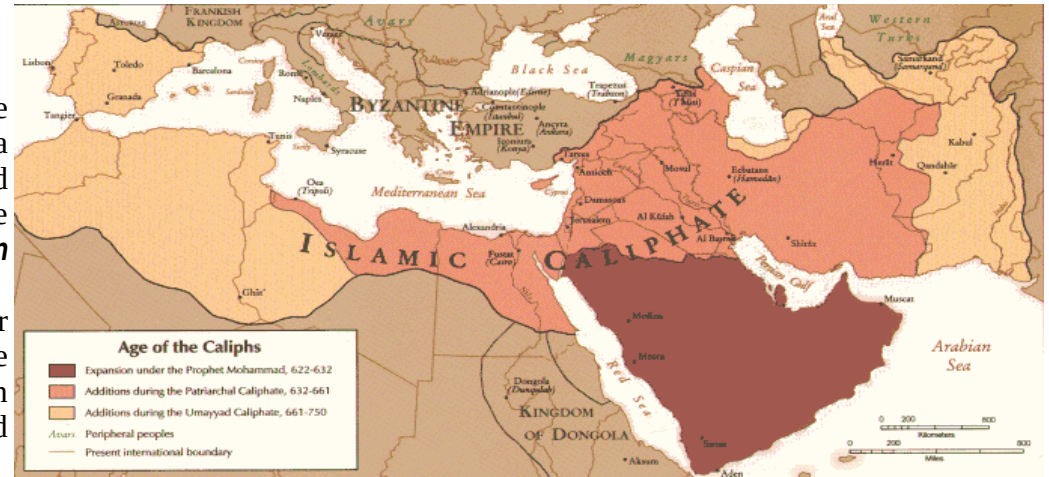
- 1) The first Tang emperor usurped his Sui maternal first cousin in 618. He claimed Taoism's "founder" Laozi as his paternal ancestor, making Taoism the primary state religion. The Tang also sponsored syncretic Chan Buddhism's rise in Buddhist monasteries. Wu, the *only* woman to be emperor, *heavily* elevated Buddhism from 660 until 705, and her grandson Xuanzong ruled over the zenith of Tang power from 712, but a slow decline began near the end of his long reign. Wuzong ruled from 840 and banned all "foreign" faiths, closing 4,600 Buddhist monasteries, but he died in 846. Afterwards, Chan became the primary Buddhism of China.
- 2) Songtsen Gampo conquered the entire Tibetan plateau by 650 and Buddhism soon spread into the new Tibetan Empire. Trisong Detsen inherited in 755, inviting Vajrayana Buddhist monks from India to translate scriptures. Ralpacan inherited in 815, also promoting Buddhist scripture translation. Tibet broke up in civil war in 841.



Rise of Islam

Mohammad and the early Caliphate

- 1) Mohammad ruled the city of Medina from 622. He conquered Mecca in 630, but died in 632. Most of Arabia converted to Islam afterwards. He is the only revered founder of a lasting widespread religion who was also the conquering founder of a new government. The *Quran* collects his “recited” revelations of “the” god.
- 2) The Rashidun Caliphs ruled from Medina after Mohammad and quickly swept out to conquer the Sasanian Empire and North Africa. Zoroastrianism began declining steadily in Islamic Iran. The Islamic caliph had become the ruler of a vast and growing empire.
- 3) Muawiyah I became the first caliph of the Ummayyads in 661. His son, Yazid I, succeeded him in 680, but many felt this dynastic succession was a betrayal, including Muhammad’s last grandson, Husayn ibn ‘Ali. Yazid and Husayn battled at Karbala and Husayn was beheaded. Shi’a commemorate this, believing only men directly descended from ‘Ali and Fatimah bint Muhammad can lead all Muslims.
- 4) The Ummayyads invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711, bringing the caliphate to its territorial peak. The Ummayyads proved willing to put Christians in prominent positions for the sake of stability of their empire, especially doing so in Syria, but they reversed themselves in 741, decreed only Muslims could hold government posts, and pursued an aggressive policy of Arabization in Iran and central Asia, sparking anger in the non-Muslim majority. Supposedly, those able to *read* certain languages were to be executed and Buddhism disappeared from central Asia. A massive revolt in central Asia in 746 soon swamped the Umayyads and the clan was executed in 750.
- 5) The Abbasids, descendants of Mohammad’s uncle, had orchestrated these revolutions, becoming the new caliphs. Former Ummayyad emirs in the Iberian Peninsula became independent Cordoba and northwestern Africa fell to the Idrisids, but the Abbasids retained the rest. They shared power with non-Arabic Muslims, and with restrictions, other “people of the Book”, avoiding ethnic conflicts. Their newly built capital of Baghdad (just south of old Sassanid Ctesiphon) hosted the Islamic Golden Age as Muslims soon *far* outstripped Christendom in philosophy, mathematics, engineering, and architecture. The early Abbasids encouraged the rationalist Mu‘tazilis, who felt scriptures unsupported by fact must be metaphorical, and heavily sponsored the scholars of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, who carefully translated classics from surrounding cultures into Arabic for study. The empire began fracturing in 861 as the Iranian Saffarids broke away and the Mu‘tazila soon fell from favor. The *Kutub al-Sittah* Hadith collections were first compiled between ~860 and 915.



Response to Muslim expansion in the Eastern Roman Empire, the Kingdom of the Franks, and China

- 1) From 602 to 628, the Romans had fought a long brutal war against the Sassanids, which weakened both empires, and they suffered a crushing defeat against the Rashidun Caliphs in 636 to the east of the Sea of Galilee. The next year the Sassanids fell, and by 711, the Romans had lost North Africa, the Levant, and the southern Iberian Peninsula, retaining only Anatolia and parts of Greece and Italy.
- 2) The Ummayyads had conquered southern Gaul by 725. In 732, they tried invading northern Gaul. Charles Martel, *de facto* ruler and Mayor of the Palace to Theuderic IV, *de jure* King of the Franks, led Christian forces gathered from Francia and Burgundy against the Muslim invasion at the Battle of Tours. His total victory resounded across Europe and the Ummayyads retreated across the Pyrenees.
- 3) Tang China lost a small war against combined Abbasid and Tibetan forces in 751 along the Talas River. Soon after, Tang papermaking techniques spread to the Abbasids, enhancing Arab bookmaking. The Tang allied with the Uighurs against the Abbasids in 789.

Charlemagne and the rise of the Papacy

Origin of the Papal States

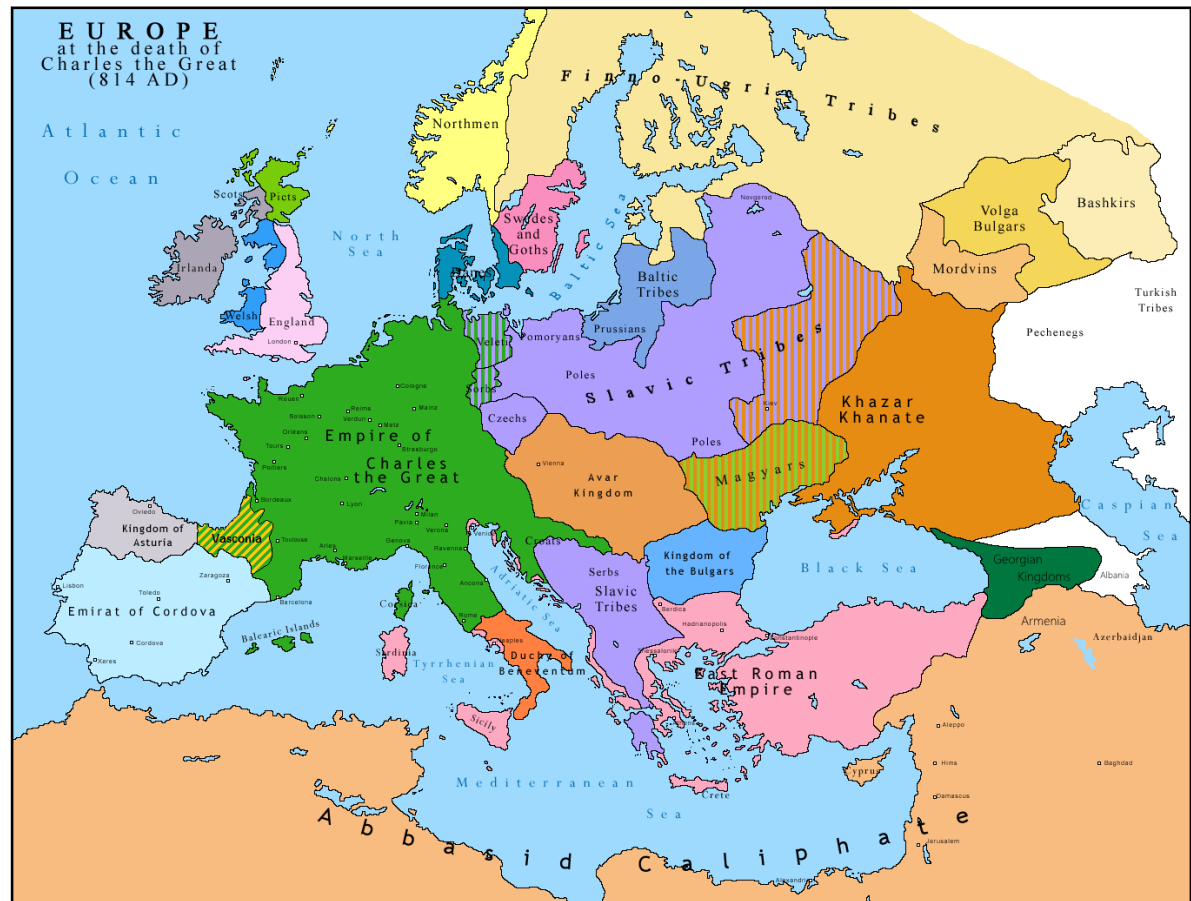
The Romans were losing territory everywhere. They lost their hold on Italy in 751, leaving Pope Zachary on his own. This time the Pope allied with the Franks and declared Pepin III, son and heir of Charles Martel, as King of the Franks. Pepin then invaded Italy on the Pope's behalf, beating the Lombard king of Italy. Out of gratitude, Pepin gave Pope Stephen the central Italian territories formerly ruled by the Romans from Ravenna.

Charlemagne

- 1) Charles I inherited the Frankish throne in 768 and expanded the realm. He continued to protect the Pope and battled the Emirate of Cordoba, creating the Spanish March in 795 from captured territory.
- 2) The Pope was so grateful for all of Charles service that he crowned him Emperor of the Romans in 800. This caused *serious* diplomatic problems with the Eastern Roman Empire, but created a new font of authority in western Europe. Louis I, son of Charles "the Great" (*Charlemagne* in Latin), inherited in 814. His sons waged civil war from 832, finally resolved in the Treaty of Verdun in 843 which carved out West Francia, Middle Francia, and East Francia.

Tensions between Rome and Constantinople

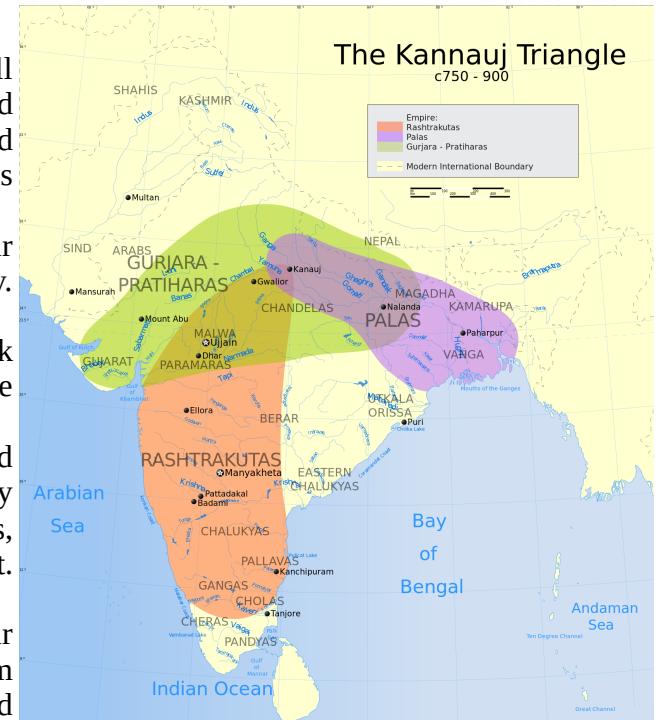
The Papacy was often weak after the Western Roman Empire collapsed. Gelasius I had strongly asserted papal primacy in the 490s. Gregory I did the same in the 590s. (He also sent Augustine, who later became the first Bishop of Canterbury, to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons.) In 692, the Quinisext Council, held to "complete" the Second and Third Councils of Constantinople, confirmed the Pentarchy model of five autocephalous churches headed by patriarchs, but Pope Sergius I vehemently rejected this council's canons. Emperor Constantine V sponsored a council in 754 that condemned the veneration of icons, but the newly independent Pope rejected it and no patriarch attended. Constantine's daughter-in-law, Empress Irene, convened the Second Council of Nicaea in 786 which restored the veneration of icons with the Pope's approval, but the crowning of Charles I as a "false" Roman emperor in 800 enraged Constantinople. After a series of military defeats and Charlemagne's death, the Constantinopolitan emperors again condemned icons until 843 and the Ecumenical Patriarch began objecting to the word *filioque* in the Latin Nicene Creed, which corresponds to nothing in the Greek original.



Late Classical India and Song China

The Kannauj Triangle and the slow decline of Buddhism, the Cholas, and the Gurids

- 1) Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh in 712 and the Umayyads hoped to conquer all India. Bin Qasim's successor, Al-Junayd met fierce resistance from Nagabhata I and other Indian rulers who held back the Muslim advance. Nagabhata and his heirs formed the Pratihara Empire of northwestern India, which proved able to repel Muslim invasions for over two centuries. The Pratiharas expanded over most of northern India by 836.
- 2) The Chalukya Empire, the first major power of South India, fell to the Rashtrakutas, their former vassals, in 753. The Rashtrakutas sponsored Hinduism and Jainism quite heavily. Adi Shankara, a key Hindu saint, was *probably* a native to the Rashtrakuta Empire.
- 3) The Pala Empire rose in northeastern India along the Ganges river watershed, but shrank towards the Ganges delta as the Pratiharas expanded eastwards. The Palas oversaw the genesis of Bengali culture and heavily patronized Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.
- 4) Vajrayana Buddhism formed as Shaivite Hinduism came to dominate southern India and syncretized with Mahayana Buddhism in northeastern India and Southeast Asia. They began composing **Buddhist Tantras**. The Vajrayana believe rituals, special visualizations, arcane meditation techniques, and the like can accelerate the way to enlightenment. These beliefs spread through the Pala Empire, Tibet, and China during this time.
- 5) The Western Chalukyas ousted their Rashtrakutan rulers in 973 and took over their territory, often contended with the Cholas in the southeast for the next century. Buddhism evaporated from southern India from this era while Jainism also rapidly declined and Vaishnava Hinduism became prevalent as the “standardized” **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** Sanskrit epics spread widely as devotionals.
- 6) Mahmud became Sultan of Gazni in 997 and ruled virtually all of central Asia by 1030. He soon after often raided into northern India, destroying the Pratiharas. The Yadavas defeated the Western Chalukyas in 1150 to become the new rulers of Deccan. The Ghurids conquered the Gaznavids in 1151 and the Ghurids had taken over nearly all of northern India by 1197. Islam began to spread widely in northern India while Buddhism rapidly disappeared. In 1206, a Mamluk ruler defeated the Ghurids and became the first Delhi Sultan.



The end of Tang China and the Song dynasty

- 1) As the Tang emperors were losing control to regional commanders, the Huang Chao Rebellion broke out in 874, lasting for an entire decade. In 907, a young regional commander overthrew the last Tang emperor, hurling China into another era of disunity called “Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms”.
- 2) The first Song emperor, Taizu, was proclaimed by soldiers in 960. He rapidly calmed and unified China again. The Song could not conquer all of the north formerly held by the Tang, but made an uneasy peace with Liao in 1005 and captured some Western Xia territory. The Song supported the Jinn in conquering the Liao in 1125, but the Jinn soon after conquered northern China in 1127. The Song retrenched in the south, developing sea trading networks and a powerful modernized navy armed with bomb throwers.
- 3) Zhu Xi died in 1200, a controversial scholar who had promoted “Neo-Confucianist” rejection of Taoist and Buddhist ideas. China's surrounding rivals were staunch Buddhists then. Zhu's commentaries on the Four Books were required for civil service exams by 1241 and soon also spread to Korea and Japan.

The High Middle Ages and the Crusades

Dissolution of Abbasid rule and the rise of Iranians and Turks

- 1) The Abbasid caliphs grew weak in the 860s. They temporarily revived under al-Mu'tadid from 892 through 902, but afterwards lost control. Their Iranian subjects divvied up central Asia.
- 2) The Buyids took political and military control of Abbasid lands by 945, but the Abbasids remained titular caliphs, reduced to be a kind of Sunni papacy in Baghdad, now only a cultural capital.
- 3) The “Fiver” Shi'a Fatamid caliphs rose among Algerian Berber peasants, ruling from Tunisia by 909. They conquered Egypt in 969, built Cairo from 973 as their new capital to rival Baghdad, and captured the holy lands of the Levant and the Hejaz by 1000.
- 4) The Gaznavids were Persianized Turks who dominated southern central Asia between 1000 and 1150. Their rulers were the first to be called Sultans, deferring to the Abbasids *only* in religion.
- 5) The Seljuk Turks captured Iran in 1040, conquered Buyid Iraq in 1055, and expanded until 1090, conquering western central Asia, the Levant, the Hejaz, and central and eastern Anatolia, but when Malikshah I died in 1092, the empire split. Four satellite states broke away in central Asia, Anatolia, the Levant, and Hejaz. The Shah of Khwarezm vanquished the last Seljuk Sultan in 1194.
- 6) The Abbasid caliphs ruled southern Mesopotamia from 1157.



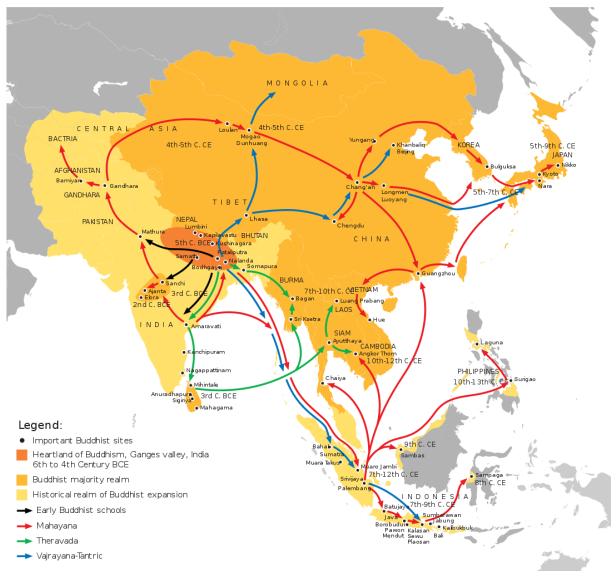
Slavic Christianization, the Holy Roman Empire, Scandinavian Christianization, France, Norman England, and the Crusades

- 1) Duke Rastislav invited Saints Cyril and Methodius to convert the Czechs in 863. Cyril created a Slavic alphabet, later to become Cyrillic, used to translate the Bible and the liturgy. Bulgaria converted in 870 and Vladimir, the Grand Duke of Kiev and Rus', was baptized in 877, both using the new Slavic Bible and liturgy under the Ecumenical Patriarchate, displeasing the king of East Francia and the Pope.
- 2) Northern Italian emperors were coronated from 891, but none at all after 924. Otto I inherited East Francia in 936 and was crowned the first German “Holy Roman” emperor in 962 as the Greek Roman Empire shrank against Slavic and Seljuk Turkish expansion.
- 3) Harald Bluetooth was the first Scandinavian ruler to get baptized, at the demand of Emperor Otto I. Harald’s son Sweyn Forkbeard, who was baptized with his father, inherited both Denmark and Norway in 986. Sweyn’s son Cnut ruled England, Denmark, and Norway until 1035. Sweyn Forkbeard’s son-in-law, Olof Skötkonung, became the first Christian king of Sweden around 995.
- 4) The kings of West Francia ennobled a few Vikings to defend against the rest, famously enfeoffing Rollo with Normandy in 911. In 1066, Duke William II of Normandy conquered England and became its new king, William I. In 1190, Phillip II retitled himself “King of FRANCE” and his grandson, Saint Louis, took Normandy away from King Henry III of England in 1259.
- 5) In 1054, mutual excommunication of the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch split **Roman Catholicism** and **Eastern Orthodoxy**. In 1095, the Pope called for a Crusade to “assist the East” against the Turks and it proved an astonishing success. Frankish nobles conquered Jerusalem in 1099 and created princedoms on the eastern Mediterranean coast, leading to further crusades and destabilizing Fatimid Egypt. Saladin, a Sunni Kurd, became Sultan of Egypt in 1174, also ruled over Hejaz soon after, and retook Jerusalem in 1187.

Genghis Khan, Yuan China, and Islamic India

Mongolian dominance of Asia

- 1) Genghis Kahn became ruler of the Mongol alliance in 1206 and conquered northern China and all of northern central Asia. By 1279, his successors governed from Russia and Turkey all the way through China. They forced laws of the Tengri faith on their subjects, including a prohibition on kosher and halal butchery, but did not prohibit other faiths.
- 2) Kublai Kahn focused on ruling China and established the Yuan dynasty. He patronized Tibetan Buddhism, governing Tibet and all Buddhist monks as a single entity *entirely* delegated to the chief lama of Tibet's Sakya school. When Kublai died in 1294, the Mongol Empire had split into four.
- 3) Baghdad was sacked and the Abbasid caliph killed in 1258. The kahn of the Middle East converted from Tibetan Buddhism to Islam in 1295, but his government utterly disintegrated after 1335 as the Black Death spread. By 1313, the kahns of the Golden Horde in the northwest also converted to Islam and continued to hold Russia as vassals.
- 4) Timur, of Turkish/Mongolian heritage, (AKA Tamerlane) formed a new central Asian empire in 1370 that conquered most of the Middle East by the time of his death in 1405.



Buddhism grows in Japan, the Theravada revival, the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals

- 1) Buddhism was “introduced” to Japan in 552, but only became prominent in Japan during the Middle Ages. Honen (died in 1212) established the Pure Land School, focused on rebirth in the realm of the celestial Amitabha Buddha. Contemporaries of Honen brought Chan from China, becoming “Zen” in Japanese. Pure Land and Zen are now Japan’s largest Buddisms.
- 2) As Muslim trade with southeast Asia began to run through Sri Lanka between 1000 and 1400 while Buddhism disappeared in India, Sri Lanka’s ancient Pali Tripitaka and Theravada Buddhism became heavily predominant in every part of Southeast Asia, except Vietnam.
- 3) The Sultans of northern India did not suffer the Mongol invasions, but lamented as the Middle East did. Many of these rulers decided to destroy Hindu temples and forced conversions to Islam. They often built new mosques on the site of old temples and *exceedingly few* Hindu temples remain in northern India from before this era, a continuing source of ire in India’s continual sectarian divides. Babur, a direct descendant of Timur, invaded India and conquered the last Dehli Sultan in 1526, founding the Mughal Empire. Akbar took the throne in 1556 and *adored* discussing religion, famously hosting rancorous religious debates in his presence. He proclaimed a new faith he had designed in 1582, which remained official until his death in 1605, scandalizing Muslims and *delighting* Hindus.

European calamity and the rise of the Ottomans

- 1) Pope Boniface VIII declared in 1302 the necessity of all people being “subject to the Roman pontiff” for salvation. In 1305, the new French Pope moved to Avignon and his successors increasingly favored France. Two years of deep famine ravaged Europe from 1315. In 1348, the Black Death, already having plagued western Asia for a decade, spread from Constantinople over all Europe during six abysmal years. The last of seven successive French pope returned to Rome in 1377 and soon died. A new Italian Pope was elected in Rome and a new French Pope was elected in Avignon. In 1407, a third pope was selected. Finally, all three popes had to resign in 1415 and Pope Martin V was elected in 1417. Papal power *never* recovered and all Europe was weaker, war ravaged, and much less populous after a calamitous century.
- 2) The first Ming emperor, Hongwu, was educated as a Buddhist monk. He defeated the last of the hated Yuan in 1368, pushed them into Mongolia, and restored native rule of China. The Ming expelled Christianity and Islam, converted Vajrayana monasteries into Chan Buddhist or Taoist ones, and heavily supported Taoism over other faiths.
- 3) The Ottomans rose from one of the Seljuk Turkish emirates of Anatolia. They conquered Constantinople in 1453, renamed it Istanbul and made it the capital of their new empire. The Abbasid caliphs had been reestablished as Sunni religious leaders under the Mamluk Sultans of Cairo in 1261, but the Ottoman padishah, Selim I, declared himself the new caliph when he conquered Egypt in 1517. His son Suleiman inherited in 1520 and expanded Ottoman rule over Mesopotamia, Hungary and modern Romania in the Balkans, and northern Africa. His son Selim II inherited in 1566.
- 4) Iran was reunified in 1501 by Shah Ismail I as a new empire and he established “Twelver” Shi'a Islam as Iran's official religion.
- 5) Frederick III was crowned by Pope Nicholas V in 1452 as the first Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor. His great grandson, Charles V, inherited in 1519, the last Holy Roman Emperor to be crowned by a Pope in 1530. He also inherited Spain as Charles I while its new colonial empire conquered Aztec and Inca territory. He failed to capture Hungary from Suleiman and failed to prevent Protestantism.
- 6) Shah Jahan, Akbar's grandson, reversed on Mughal religious tolerance. His son, Aurangzeb, inherited in 1658, enforced strict Sharia, and conquered nearly all India before dying in 1707. Soon after, the Sikhs in Punjab and the Marathas revolted and *crushed* Mughal power.



The Renaissance & the Reformation

The Italian Renaissance and the printing press

- 1) In the 1330s, Tuscan writer Petrarch, known for perfecting the sonnet, referred to his era as one of “darkness and dense gloom” compared to the glory of ancient Rome and its writings. Ancient Latin literature, and some pagan ideals, were fashionably revived as Florence rose in commercial and cultural glory. Tuscan scholars began to tour Europe looking for lost Latin manuscripts, like Poggio Bracciolini’s famous 1417 rediscovery of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*. However, instead of trying to revive the classical Latin language, these writers instead used their own Tuscan dialect and modeled a new literature on these rediscovered classics. In 1439, Gutenberg created the first European printing press, and in 1455, had published the Bible. As Greek scholars sought refuge in Italy in the wake of Ottoman expansion, Italian scholars also focused on ancient Greek texts. As the Medici family rose in prominence in Florence, they heavily patronized this new “humanism”.
- 2) Muslim Granada fell in 1492, unifying Spain and ending the Reconquista. The **Alhambra Decree** forced all Jews to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain and Muslims were soon under the same pressure. Early in 1493, Columbus returned from his first voyage to the Americas, where Spain and Portugal soon founded colonies and converted the natives to Catholicism while exterminating their previous beliefs. In 1526, the Portuguese conducted the first slave trade voyage from Africa to the Americas, to replace the labor of natives dying from European diseases.
- 3) After the fall of Constantinople, Ivan III of Muscovy ended his vassalage to Muslim khans in 1476 and consolidated a single Russian state. His grandson, Ivan IV, became the first Tsar of Russia in 1547. As Europe embraced new ideas, Russia upheld old Constantinopolitan traditions.

The Reformation and the subordination of church authority to state authority

As Renaissance ideals steadily spread throughout Europe, the eminent humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam published his *Novum Testamentum Omne* in 1516, the first published Greek text of the New Testament alongside a Latin text he had revised from the Vulgate, and he began to champion textual criticism to purify understanding and even as a guide to church reform. Martin Luther promulgated his **Ninety-Five Theses** in 1517 against selling indulgences. The intense competition of Italian nobility had politicized the Papacy as a powerful nepotistic Renaissance principality during the last century, resulting in blatantly corrupt popes who commanded little respect among other European elites. Luther’s renunciation of these hypocrisies and his developing anti-papal theology led to excommunication in 1520. He wrote in vernacular German and also translated both the Bible and the liturgy into German for the first time as he organized a new church under the protection of the Prince-electors of Saxony. He denounced a peasant uprising in 1525, siding with the nobility. Erasmus denounced Luther in 1529 as no true reformer at all and left Switzerland as the Reformed Church of Ulrich Zwingli took hold there. The English Parliament declared King Henry VIII to be the Supreme Head of the Church of England in 1534. John Calvin published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536 and began reforming the church of Geneva in 1541. He supported the Genevan authorities in executing anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus by slow burning in 1553 and his authority in Geneva was soon after nearly absolute. Calvin’s associate John Knox led the Scottish Reformation in 1560, aligning Scotland more closely with England than with France for the first time in centuries, and the people of the Netherlands also adopted Calvinist beliefs while Scandinavia became staunchly Lutheran. The Council of Trent began in 1545, condemned Protestantism, reaffirmed and reinforced traditional Catholic practices, clarified Catholic doctrine, and ended in 1564. The Pope also published the first *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* that year.



The Enlightenment and secular republics

The European Wars of Religion & the Enlightenment

- 1) Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism polarized all of Europe west of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The cantons of Switzerland, in 1529 and 1531, and the principalities of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1546-47, both fought brief “holy wars” in which each side tried for total victory. France fought a devastating civil “holy war” from 1562 between the Calvinist Huguenots in their southwest and the Catholic monarchy until King Henry IV (a former Huguenot who converted to inherit) issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598. The Dutch revolted in 1568 against the Spanish Hapsburg king as their northwestern Germanic population increasingly became Calvinist and demanded the removal of the Spanish Inquisition. They became a republic in 1581. Spain attempted to invade England in 1588, but failed to unseat Elizabeth I, and warred against France from 1595 to 1598, but failed to unseat “overly Protestant” Henry IV.
- 2) In 1618, the Thirty Year’s War broke out in the Holy Roman Empire and soon involved most of Europe. Simultaneously, Spain tried to retake the Netherlands. *It was the most devastating conflict ever fought in Europe before the 20th century*; probably over half the population of southern Germany was killed. The English Civil War broke out in 1642. The diplomatically negotiated Peace of Westphalia ended the conflicts in continental Europe in 1648 and established the principle of “*cuius regio, eius religio*” (whoever rules, his religion) in Europe, but the English *beheaded King Charles I* in 1649 by Parliamentary authority, declared the Commonwealth of England, ejected Charles II in 1651, and empowered Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell in 1653. Charles II returned in 1660. Young Louis XIV of France faced down the Fronde in 1653, ended a twenty-five year war with Spain in 1659, soon became an absolute monarch at his Palace of Versailles, issued the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1685 to dragonnade the Huguenots, and died in 1717, leaving France the premier power of Europe. In 1685, James II inherited England and converted to Catholicism, but Parliament replaced him with William and Mary in 1688. Frederick II inherited the Prussian throne in 1740 and undermined the Holy Roman Empire by *finally* conquering Silesia in 1760.
- 3) During the 1600s, natural philosophy progressed tremendously in the service of war while disassociating and differentiating itself from esoteric superstitions as *scientia* based on experiment and empirical measure. During Louis XV’s long reign, the new *philosophes* emerged in the salons of Paris who openly questioned tradition, admired England’s increasingly democratic institutions, promoted and participated in the new sciences, *detested* the tyranny of organized religion, and sought intellectual and social **ENLIGHTENMENT!** Diderot edited and published the subtly anti-clerical seventeen volume *Encyclopédie* from 1751 to 1765. Baron d’Holbach published his explicitly atheist and naturalist *System of Nature* in 1770. The new ideas spread throughout Europe and saturated French intellectuals... **Écrasez l'infâme!**

The American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the two Napoleons

- 1) England’s North American colonies revolted in 1775, complaining of no representation in the British Parliament. They won in 1783, becoming the United States of America, ratified the secular U.S. Constitution in 1788, and amended it with the Bill of Rights in 1791.
- 2) The French Revolution began in 1789 as the National Assembly took power and passed *The Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Edmund Burke wrote *Reflections* in 1790. France was invaded in 1792, but then conquered the invaders’ territories. The Assembly executed Louis XVI in 1793 and outlawed Catholicism to instead promote the Cult of Reason. The Directory took power in 1795, outlawed the Cult of Reason to promote the Cult of the Supreme Being, and instituted the “Reign of Terror”. Napoleon took power via coup in 1799, restored the Church in 1801, crowned himself emperor in 1804 – *literally* grasping the crown from the Pope’s hands – and conquered Europe, but fell in 1814. The Congress of Vienna “restored” Europe in 1815 as the Holy Roman Emperor became Emperor of Austria. The French king was restored, but then deposed by his cousin in 1830. A wave of *failed* Europe-wide revolutions in 1848 empowered Napoleon III in France as *The Communist Manifesto* appeared, but France became a Republic from 1870 onward.

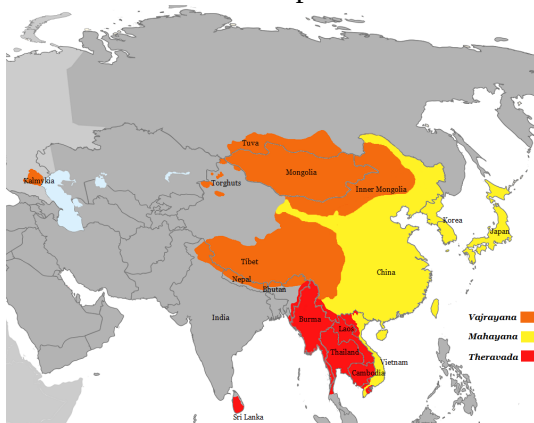


Colonialism and Christendom

- 1) Spain colonized all the Americas, save for Portuguese Brazil and French, Dutch, and English colonies in North America, the Guianas, and the West Indies. The Dutch planted their Presbyterianism in New Amsterdam (1613); English congregational Calvinists settled New England (1620); Quakers, Anabaptists, and other “non-conformists” settled Pennsylvania (1681); and Anglicanism and Scottish Presbyterianism were established in Canada and England’s southern colonies. The Americas received Catholic missionaries elsewhere. Spain took the Philippines, which adopted Catholicism, while the Portuguese led in the East Indies and coastal India. The Dutch dominated the East Indies by 1650 and soon settled in South Africa. Russia settled Alaska (1733). Britain took French territory in North America and India after the Seven Years’ War (1763), settled Australia (1788), and captured South Africa from the Dutch (1794).
- 2) After the American Revolution (1783), Haitian Revolution (1804), and the end of Napoleonic Spain (1813), Latin American revolutions ended Spanish and Portuguese authority in the continental Americas by 1824. Over 13,000 U.S. free blacks settled Liberia from 1822–1867. Britain claimed New Zealand (1840); began direct rule of India, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma (1858); and declared the Empire of India (1876). France began rule of Indochina (1864). Europeans ignored Africa except to trade in coastal colonies and conduct Christian missions until Britain took over Egypt and the Suez Canal in 1882. The 1884–5 Berlin Conference set “rules” for African colonization and Belgian King Leopold II *personally* ruled the Congo “Free” State by 1885. Portugal, Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain competed for territory; Britain gained Nigeria and most of eastern Africa; France took Madagascar and most places northwest of the Belgian Congo. The U.S. took Spain’s Caribbean and Pacific territories (1898). Japan colonized Taiwan (1895), Korea (1910), and Chinese Manchuria (1932) and took eastern China and much else during WWII, but lost *all* their colonies in 1945.
- 3) Europeans colonized *all lands*, between 1492–1914 except Ethiopia, Turkey, Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, China, Korea, Japan, and Tonga. Christian missionaries made more converts in areas where Eastern Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, or Muslims did not predominate.

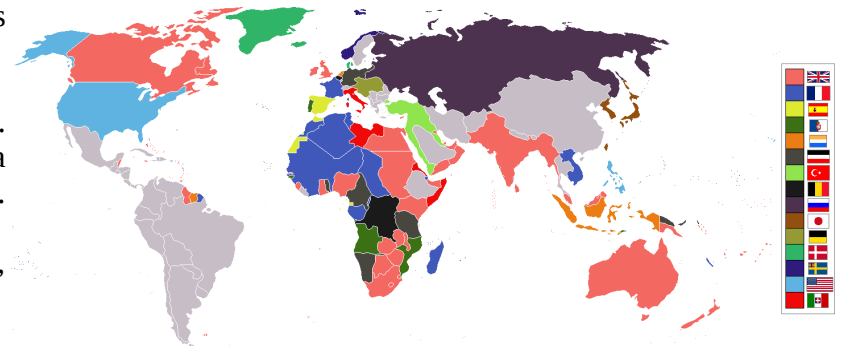
Early European nationalism and eastern European empires

- 1) Greece gained independence in 1832 with British, Russian, and French aid. Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro emerged in 1878 with Russian help. Bulgaria broke free in 1908 and Albania in 1912; but the Ottomans kept East Thrace. Nationalism soon spread into the Austrian, German, and Russian empires.
- 2) Germany and Italy both unified in 1871. Pope Pius IX lost the Papal States, declared himself “prisoner in the Vatican”, and *forbid* Catholics to vote in Italy!



Buddhism in the modern era

The “fifth” Dalai Lama began administering Tibet in 1645 with the help of a local regent under the Khoshut Khan. This khanate collapsed in 1717, but the Dalai Lamas continued to rule Tibet as “monk kings” for the next two centuries under the new Qing emperors of China and were influential in greater Mongolia and Manchuria, while Chan Buddhism remained predominant among Han people and in Korea and Vietnam. In 1872, Japan officially encouraged Zen monks to marry, eat meat, and adopt other practices of Shinto priests, attempting to make Shinto the nation’s sole faith while heavily industrializing. While Buddhism declined in Sri Lanka under colonialism, Theravada Buddhism remained heavily patronized in Burma and Thailand. The Theosophical Society moved their headquarters to India in 1878, where they influenced Indian nationalism with contemporary ideas about Indian faiths, but also exported Hindu and Buddhist ideas back to the West. Dhammaloka was *probably* the first recorded European Buddhist monk.



A new Axial Age? Sikhs, Mormons, and the Baha'i

Sikhs, the Punjab Empire, resistance to colonialism, and the partition of India

Guru Nanak, a Hindu, had a “revelation” in 1499 that the one god is “neither Hindu nor Muslim” and founded a new guru lineage. Early Sikhs thrived in Mughal India, but Emperor Jahangir, Akbar’s son, executed their fifth guru, who had compiled a new scripture. Sikhs then became militant. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, revised the scripture into the **Granth Sahib** – which he declared their “final Guru”. He lost all his sons battling Emperor Aurangzeb and died in 1708. Sikh warriors soon carved out territories in Punjab, united by Ranjit Singh in 1801 into an empire. After he died, the British captured his last son and heir and added Punjab to the British Raj. During the partition of India, most of the Punjab fell to Pakistan, but nearly all Sikhs moved to Indian Punjab. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered a deadly attack on Sikh separatists in 1984; her Sikh bodyguards assassinated her, sparking harsh anti-Sikh riots. Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister of India in 2004–14, the first and only Sikh to hold the highest office. 69% of all Sikhs live in Indian Punjab today, where 58% of residents are Sikhs; 21% live elsewhere in India; and almost 5% live in Canada, Britain, or the U.S.

The Latter-Day Saints, the colonization of Utah, plural marriage, and eventual assimilation into the U.S.

Joseph Smith published **The Book of Mormon** in 1830 and his new Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS church) soon moved near Kansas City, Missouri, but was violently driven out in 1838 by the Missouri authorities. The LDS then founded Nauvoo, Illinois and elected Smith mayor. In 1844, an anti-Mormon mob lynched Smith while he was jailed awaiting trial. Brigham Young led the majority of the LDS westward in 1846 as the Mexican–American War began. They founded Salt Lake City in 1847, which became part of the U.S. in 1848. In 1851, President Fillmore named Young the Utah Territory’s governor and he led Utah to legalize their *de facto* slavery of blacks and Native Americans, proclaimed blacks spiritually inferior, and publicized the previously hidden doctrine of “plural marriage” that *recommended* polygyny for the LDS. President Buchanan had Young replaced as governor of Utah Territory in 1858, leading to the Utah War between the LDS and the U.S. Army. No LDS governors were appointed over the territory after Brigham Young. Congress outlawed polygamy in U.S. territories in 1862. Young died in 1877 and the Supreme Court upheld monogamy in Utah in 1878, leading to escalating confrontations between LDS and U.S. authorities. Congress legally abolished the LDS church in 1890 and seized its assets. Very soon after, Wilford Woodruff, president of the LDS church, declared that no church member should enter illegal marriages, which ended LDS polygyny. In 1896, Utah was admitted as the 45th U.S. state. All but three Utah state governors have been LDS, including all elected since 1956. 67% of Utah’s residents and 2% of all U.S. residents are LDS today; half of all LDS live in the U.S. or Mexico.

The Baha'i, their universalism, and their expectation of a new world state grounded in their faith

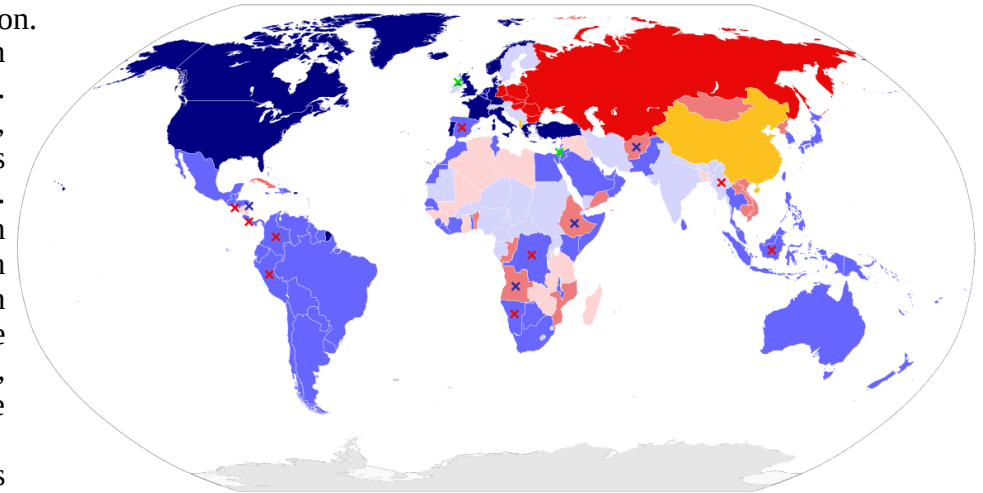
In 1844, Ali Muhammad of Iran claimed to be the *Bab* (“gateway” in Arabic) – the *Mahdi* (“guided” in Arabic) – but also prophesied a successor. Thousands of Shi'a converted. In 1848, he revealed his unfinished **Persian Bayan**, was convicted of heresy, and in 1850, was executed. Some Babis revolted against the Shah while others fled Iran. Iranian nobleman Mirza Husayn-Ali Nuri, imprisoned by the Ottomans, declared himself Baha'u'llah (“glory of god” in Arabic) – the Bab’s true successor – in 1866 at Edirne and *most* Babis became Baha'is. Baha'u'llah addressed “tablets” to national leaders; he finished the **Kitab-i-Aqdas**, the Baha'i divine law, in 1873. After he died at Acre in 1892, his son Abdu'l Baha (d. 1921) led, and after WWI, toured the world. Abdu'l’s grandson Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) next led, but had no heir. The elected nine-member Universal House of Justice now leads the faith. Baha'is put *heavy* emphasis on the unity of humanity, the unity of all religions, and the prophesied unified world government. They maintain many offices with the U.N. and quietly anticipate state sponsorship, but do not seek it out. The Baha'i Faith is in 182 countries, more than *any other religion* except Christianity.

Are we in a “New Axial Age”?

Sikhs, Mormons, Spiritists, Tenriists in Japan, Baha'is, Ahmadiyyas in Pakistani Punjab, Theosophists, Caodaists in Vietnam, Falun Gong in China, and the innumerable other faiths that have emerged during the modern era have led some to declare it a New Axial Age, but others feel past suppression of “heresies” prevented the multiplication of beliefs that otherwise *usually* continually occurs.

The Twentieth Century

- 1) The Chinese revolted against the Qing emperor in 1911 to become a republic in 1912, but collapsed as warlords took over by 1915. The Russian Revolutions of 1917 led to the first *officially* atheist and first **communist** state, which then withdrew itself from WWI.
- 2) The League of Nations formed in 1920 after WWI, but the U.S. *did not* join. The Allies broke Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia out of Austria and recreated Poland. Britain and France divvied up German and Ottoman territory. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania emerged from communist Russia while Ireland pulled away from Britain. Britain created kings over Transjordan (1921), Egypt (1922), and Iraq (1932) while Turkey retired the caliphate (1924) and Hejaz fell to Saudi Arabia (1925). Europe's **social democratic and labor** parties won national office, but fascism and **communism** grew when markets crashed. Pope Pius XI and Mussolini's Italy signed the Lateran Pacts in 1929, creating the Vatican City State as the Papacy *finally* recognized Italy. Britain gave Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa autonomy (1931). Spain's secular republic fell into civil war in 1936 and became a cauldron of radical politics, but the anti-clerical leftists among republicans led the Church to openly side with the fascist Francoists, who won in 1939.
- 3) WWII set secular democratic republics and the anti-religious Soviet Union against fascists and Shintoist imperial Japan. Kamikaze pilots demonstrated nihilism in Shinto and Zen. Germany's defeat revealed the horrors of the Holocaust as Zionist Jews emigrated to British Palestine. The existential threat of atomic weapons emerged. The United Nations formed in 1945 and passed the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 1948, including the freedoms of speech and of religion.
- 4) Italy had conquered Ethiopia in 1936 and Albania in 1939, but Britain freed them during WWII and took over Italy's other colonies. Lebanon (1945), the Philippines, Syria (1946), India (1947–8), Israel, Indonesia (1949), Indochina (1949–53), the North African nations (1951–62), and the Belgian Congo (1960) achieved independence. The U.N. Decolonization Committee oversaw the French and British exit from Africa in the 1960s, Portuguese and Spanish decolonization in 1974–5, and the independence of territories in Indian Ocean, South China Sea, Pacific, and Caribbean waters from 1961–94. Only the West Bank, Western Sahara, New Zealand's Tokelau, and two French, three U.S., and ten British territories remain colonial subjects, but the effects of missionary zeal and economic exploitation still linger...
- 5) The Soviets repressed their old Orthodox Church and other religious bodies resented for past justification of tzarist and aristocratic brutality against common people. The Soviets annexed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania during WWII and sponsored communism in eastern Europe and East Germany, where anti-religious policies spread and committed religious people suffered discrimination, abuse, and torture. In 1949, NATO formed and Mao Zedong took leadership of the People's Republic of China. The Korean War (1950–3) ended in stalemate and the Warsaw Pact emerged (1955). The decolonizing "third world" became a battleground over economic interests, "liberal" government, and communism. After a decade of alienation from the USSR, Mao declared the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966 and the Chinese spent the next decade destroying "bourgeois" privileges, including religious sites and religious art, and defrocking monks and priests. The Northern Irish and Israeli conflicts hinged on religious polarization and terrorism. The U.S. backed many nationalistic, fascistic, or religious authoritarians anxious to eliminate communism, as in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–89), polarizing religion. Pope John Paul II, who had been a young bishop in post-WWII communist Poland, involved himself and the Church in its Solidarity labor movement. When the Soviet union fell (1991), many credited supernatural agency. Cuba, China, Vietnam, and North Korea are now the only *officially* atheist states left... but not communist Laos.



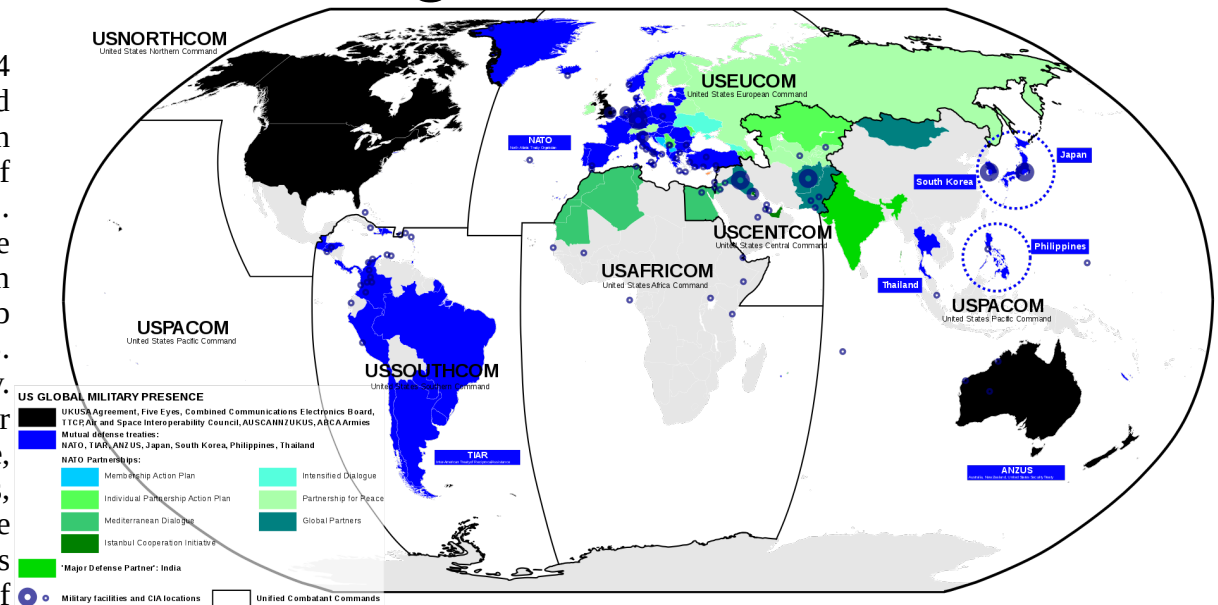
U.S.A. – sole superpower of a globalized world

Globalization, terrorism, and U.S. dominance

- 1) The Bretton Woods Conference of July 1944 established the world financial order that followed WWII, but after the gold standard broke down in 1973, the U.S. still remained at the center of international trade, usually still conducted in U.S. dollars. After communism collapsed in 1991, the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the creation of the World Wide Web drove planetary economic liberalization as the U.S. enjoyed a solid decade of economic prosperity. Multinational corporations gained expansive power and spread a worldwide secular consumer culture, advertising U.S.-produced movies, TV shows, music, books, and *ideas* to a global audience. The effect on cultural traditions around the world was often deeply resented. The U.S. conducted the brief Gulf War in 1991, withdrew from Somalia after Mogadishu in 1993, and led NATO into the Yugoslav Wars in 1995 and 1999. Popular culture in the West during the 1990s emphasized gay rights, third-wave feminism, individualistic choices, and highly eclectic spiritual mysticism as waves of “globalization” immigrants from non-Western cultures highlighted multiculturalism and tolerance. Evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics, already politically organized in the U.S. Republican Party, put new emphasis on “culture wars” and tried to disparage and reverse many of these trends. This often backfired, but liberals *within* traditional Christianity convinced few that Biblical faith could be reconciled with these new values. Catholic and Protestant faith was being undermined as the “nones” rose rapidly in the U.S. during this decade, particularly among teens and young adults. At the same time in the formerly communist nations, religious affiliation rose rapidly once “officially atheist” governments collapsed, and in Russia, traditional Orthodoxy quickly aligned with patriotic fervor again, but the rate of irreligion remains much higher than in similar countries that were never communist.
- 2) The Iranian Revolution of 1979 led to U.S. condemnation of militant Shi’ites, but the U.S., the Saudis, and Pakistan soon after sponsored militant Sunnis in the Soviet–Afghan War. The terrorist attack of September 11th, 2001 ignited the “War on Terror”, beginning with a U.S.-led NATO invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, but NATO *did not* participate as the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003. As Evangelicals in the U.S. discussed sending missionaries among the Afghans and Iraqis, the New Atheist movement emerged for those disgusted with organized religions and irrational supernatural beliefs in these conflicts. The number of “nones” in the U.S. continues rising as young people are increasingly less likely to identify with traditional faiths, but Evangelical Christians continue to push for overt sponsorship of Christianity by government. Meanwhile, European nations often support “recognized” churches with tax money while average people are turning away from faith in large numbers. Only the officially Buddhist and Islamic countries continue to sponsor religion very openly...

The projected future of religious and irreligious populations

[Pew released a study in 2012](#) that projects Muslims will outnumber Christians around 2070, while the worldwide percentages of “nones” and Buddhists will drop by 2050. The proportion of “nones” is projected to rise in the U.S., France, and other Western nations, but these countries will represent a smaller percentage of world population by then. (These findings are mostly based on relative birth rates.)



Conclusions and questions

What history seems to demonstrate about world religions and state sponsorship

- 1) Every lasting religion emerged from previous “official” religions. Successful faiths innovate gradually, often syncretizing multiple faiths.
- 2) All major religions describe what an ideal government should be like. All do so in their most popular holy books.
- 3) New religions have often emerged as a protest against the political status quo, but were later integrated with the state or eliminated.
- 4) The major world religions were all the enforced state religions of early empires and became the state religions of *many* successor states.
- 5) Religious schisms often emerged due along the political boundaries of conflicting states or precipitated civil wars.
- 6) No lasting state religion teaches that the attainment of a positive afterlife will be easy. All teach that a negative afterlife can only be avoided with great effort and struggle. State religions that cease to emphasize a negative afterlife tend to get disestablished.
- 7) Religions that do not gain state sponsorship tend to shrink as their first period of popularity begins to wane.
- 8) Religious building, religious writing, doctrinal conferences, and religious rituals have most often been financed directly by governments.
- 9) Religions consciously designed by hereditary rulers have never persisted long after the ruler’s death, but popular religions chosen for sponsorship by imperial governments, or religious leaders who’ve successfully started empires of their own, have often flourished.
- 10) Religions with low tolerance for other faiths have often flourished much better than faiths with a high tolerance for other faiths, but a complete lack of tolerance for other faiths often provokes a large backlash and can be self-defeating.
- 11) Political leaders frequently become religious leaders and religious leaders frequently become political leaders.
- 12) Religious devotion and patriotism are often tightly intertwined. Anti-clericalism has been usually revolutionary.
- 13) Rigidly orthodox governments have often proven to be unstable and zealous rulers often cause the collapse of their states, yet the conviction that extremely fervent religious beliefs are fundamental to societal stability is extremely widespread and persistent.
- 14) Religious governments can demand more of faithful citizens and faithful citizens are usually willing to make more sacrifices for the state.
- 15) Religiously hypocritical rulers that fail to enforce religious standards have often met outstanding success and strengthened their states.
- 16) Educational standards and educational institutions are often a key tool used to promote religion by states. Religions often run the schools.
- 17) The societies that most fully separate religion from government tend to witness a rapid erosion of religious orthodoxy.
- 18) Totalitarian regimes not aligned with a religious orthodoxy have proven very fragile, but the damage that anti-clerical and anti-religious regimes have done to religious authority has often proven to be more lasting and perennial than is generally acknowledged.

Questions about the future of organized religions and state sponsorship

- 1) Can religion ever totally disappear? Can *the lack of religion* ever persist? Can religion and government ever permanently separate?
- 2) Do governments without a state church inevitably wind up sponsoring some other official ideology? Can ideologies be rational?
- 3) Officially atheist governments have perpetrated many horrors, but their effect on religious institutions has proven to be lasting. Will organized religions peacefully fade away under secular governments or will they always persist when human rights are respected?
- 4) Officially atheist governments were often very dogmatic. Is religion the problem or is dogmatism a much deeper problem? If beliefs will not change in the face of evidence or novel experience, can governments upholding them govern effectively without deep hypocrisy?
- 5) If governments no longer teach people to fear very long lasting hells and purgatories, what motivates good behavior?
- 6) Can the “clash of civilizations” ever be peacefully resolved? Must a globalized world inevitably polarize along cultural lines? Are religions inevitably the “fault lines” of these conflicts? Can individualistic secular culture defend itself against organized religion?
- 7) Are democratic republics that respect the rule of law and human rights all that is needed to offset future religious conflicts?
- 8) Do religious changes cause government innovations? Do government changes cause religious innovations? Does the development of ideas drive changes in what is possible? Or do ideologies and organizations simply reflect the physical circumstances that produce them?
- 9) Can religious or political changes be imposed by force? If they can be imposed by force, *should* they be imposed by force?

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Religion Explained
In Gods We Trust
Guns, Germs, and Steel
Religion in Human Evolution
The Ancient Mediterranean
The Bible Unearthed

China to 1850
Gem in the Lotus
Creation & Julian
Alexander the Great
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Rise of Christianity
Decline and Fall of Rome
The Closing of the Western Mind
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Things Fall Apart
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Karen Armstrong
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Stephen Prothero
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Alain de Botton
Sam Harris

Internet Resources

Original source materials – ideologies

<http://sacred-texts.com/> Internet Sacred Texts Archive
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<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/kjv/>
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<http://al-islam.com/> Quran – “official” Saudi Arabian
<http://marxists.org/> Marxists Internet Archive
<http://infidels.org/> The Secular Web

Demographics on belief and disbelief

<http://pewforum.org/> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life
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<http://prri.org/> Public Religion Research Institute

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